ASSIMILATING THE OTHER:
FAMILIAR SARACENS AND THE COLONIAL MEDIEVALISM OF ARIOSTO'S *ORLANDO FURIOSO*

by
Lorenzo Filippo Bacchini

A dissertation submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Baltimore, Maryland
May 2022

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Abstract

Employing theoretical perspectives from Edward Said's *Orientalism* and postcolonial theory, this dissertation analyzes the depiction of Saracens in Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* and its function within what Gabrielle Michele Spiegel calls "the social logic of the text", revealing the Renaissance epic masterpiece as permeated by a colonial attitude hitherto neglected by Ariosto criticism.

The first chapter discusses the social, political, and emotional pressures that substantiate and shape the text, and Ariosto's unconventional choice to portray sixteenth-century issues by means of a Carolingian plotline.

The second and third chapters analyze the depiction of Saracens and the Muslim religion by highlighting a general process of familiarization which, on one hand, proposes the Saracens as the embodiment of an internal enemy, and, on the other, facilitates the assimilation of the invading enemy. In these chapters, specific attention is devoted to Angelica – Saracen princess who invades the West and the heart of the Christian knights – and Gano – forefather of a family historically perceived as an internal enemy of France and Christianity.

By analyzing specific Saracen characters defined as 'cross-border' – characters who straddle the border (bad Christians and good Saracens) and characters who cross the border (good Saracens who convert) – the fourth chapter uncovers a colonial mindset permeating the text and a political strategy proposed by it: the assimilation of the invading enemy through marriage. This chapter focuses on Rodomonte – the strongest Saracen invader – and Ruggiero – the Saracen invader who falls in love with, converts and marries the Christian Bradamante, interpreting a gender reversal unique in the chivalric epic tradition.

The fifth and last chapter analyzes Bradamante – the Christian woman warrior founder of d'Este dynasty (Ariosto's patrons) – and her marriage-by-duel with Ruggiero. It unveils a specific colonial strategy suggested by the poem – a defensive colonialism implemented through the cultural and political assimilation of the invading enemy – and a particular role assigned to Bradamante – active protagonist of a diplomatic act which ties the mythical origin of the d'Este family with colonial conquest.

Primary Reader and Advisor: Walter Stephens

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people, without whom I would not have been able to complete this research or made it through this Doctorate.

My greatest thanks go to my adviser and mentor, Professor Walter Stephens, who believed in me and in my project, and helped me shape this research step by step, guiding me to untangle what was initially just a cluster of ideas. Your constant support and encouragement gave me the confidence to continue every time I doubted; without your help and wise guidance this project would have not been possible.

A deep thanks also goes to Professor Eleonora Stoppino for providing advice and feedback in the last stages of my writing, and whose insight and knowledge on the subject matter helped to specifically strengthen my analysis of Bradamante.

I also wish to thank some people who, through their teachings and guidance, have contributed in different forms to the existence of this research. I would like to thank Professor Gianni Cicali, who encouraged me to pursue an academic career in the United States; Professors Teodolinda Barolini and Jo Ann Cavallo, who reawakened my love for Medieval and Renaissance Italian literature; Professor Nadia Altschul, who introduced me to post-colonial theory, and supported the early stages of this project; Professor Dagmar Reichardt, who introduced me to the concept of transculturality; and Professor Eugenio Refini, who took the time to listen to my ideas and doubts, and provided me thoughtful comments and recommendations.

I would be remiss to forget two important people who welcomed and assisted me at the beginning of my career at Johns Hopkins, and who are sadly not here today to witness the completion of my project: Professor Pier Massimo Forni and Kathy Loehmer. Professor Forni was my adviser in the early stages of my Doctorate. His teachings and outlook on life, which forged

generations of scholars and bettered persons, changed me forever and will always stay with me. Kathy was much more than just an academic coordinator, she was a friend, a counselor, and a mother for every graduate student who passed through the Department. Her unconditional comfort and support, her humor and joy, made the fourth floor of Gilman Hall feel like home, for me and many others.

An important thanks also goes to the entities at Johns Hopkins that have supported my research: the Department of Modern Languages & Literatures, the Charles Singleton Center for the Study of Premodern Europe, and the staff of the Milton S. Eisenhower Library.

Furthermore, I also wish to thank friends and colleagues whose support has been essential for the conception and completion of this research. Matteo Cantarello, Michele Zanobini, Francesco Brenna, Alejandro Alvarez, Francisco Gomez, Johannes Birke, and Luis Suarez, brilliant minds who have enlightened my path when I was losing track and inspired me with their example. The meetings and conversations with them were vital in inspiring me to think outside the box and to look at things from multiple perspectives. A special mention, amongst these friends and colleagues, goes to Troy Tower, who patiently nurtured my English, and whose expertise has been vital for the completion of this dissertation.

Finally, I would like to deeply thank my families. My children, Giacomo and Gaia, the greatest joys of my life - even if they did not exactly facilitate the completion of this research; my father Giacomo, my mother Domenica, and my brother Filippo, who supported, inspired, and encouraged me all along this journey; and my American-Uruguayan family, especially Mario and Silvia, who welcomed me into their family and made me feel at home even when I was far away from home.

Lastly, my wife, Maria Pia, who is last because I can't find the words to describe how much she helped me all along this adventure, and because it would be demeaning to describe her greatness just in relation to this work. You changed my life and gave meaning to my existence. You loved me and supported me, giving me the strength to fight, and the certainty that I would never walk alone. You allowed me to wake up every morning to do what I love and go to bed every night (when I was not working) being happy of what I had done. You are the best. I love you and I will love you forever… and I swear, now that I have finished writing, I will come to bed earlier.

To Maria Pia, Giacomo, and Gaia

who taught me to look at things from different perspectives

and make my life a continuous discovery.

Table of Contents

Abstract ii

Acknowledgements iv

Table of Contents viii

Introduction 1

Chapter 1. A defensive war: who is the enemy? 7

Chapter 2. Whitening the Saracens: Medoro, Angelica, the familiarization of the other and the invasion from within 29

Medoro 30

Angelica 36

Chapter 3. The Saracen religion as an empty box: Gano of Maganza 47

The Saracen religion 57

Gano of Maganza 68

Chapter 4. Good Saracens and bad Christians: Rodomonte and Ruggiero as cross-border characters 72

Rodomonte 77

Ruggiero 88

Ruggiero's function 90

Ruggiero's identity 96

Ruggiero's role 100

Chapter 5. Conquering the invader: Bradamante and marriage as a colonial defense 105

Bradamante 107

Conclusion 140

Bibliography 145

Manuscript Sources 145

Print and Digital Sources 145

Introduction

> Non est quod mireris ex eadem materia suis quemque studiis apta colligere: in eodem prato bos herbam querit, canis leporem, ciconia lacertam
>
> (It is not strange that from the same source different people gather what appeals to the interest of each; in the same meadow the ox seeks grass, the dog a hare, the stork a lizard)
>
> Lucius Anneus Seneca. *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium* 17-18.108.29[1]

Employing theoretical perspectives from Edward Said's *Orientalism*[2] and postcolonial theory, including the representation of the 'other', the contact and clash of different cultures and the Western perceptions of the East and Muslim religion, this dissertation analyzes the depiction of Saracens[3] in Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* and its function within what Gabrielle Spiegel calls "the social logic of the text."[4]

The form and content of any given literary object is both a product of a social world and, at the same time, also an active agent at work within it.[5] The literary text both mirrors and generates social realities, "working within, and sometimes against, the historical limits of representation."[6]

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[1] Seneca, *Letters*, trans. Moses Hadas (New York: Norton, 1968).

[2] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 2003).

[3] Both for the purposes of clarification and in recognition of the fact that in the *Furioso* ethnic terms are frequently interchangeable, this dissertation will use the term 'Saracens' to identify all non-Christian characters, variously identified in the text as infidels (*infedeli*), sometimes as pagans (*pagani*) and sometimes specifically as Moors or Saracens. In the chivalric epic, all these characters – those who are not (European) Christians – generally exhibit one common denominator: in the text they represent the 'other,' the different, the enemy and, especially, they are bearers of a cultural and/or aesthetical alterity, in different ways and degrees.

[4] Gabrielle Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), xviii: "The 'social logic of the text" is a term and a concept that seeks to combine in a single but complex framework a protocol for the analysis of a text's social site – its location within an embedded social environment of which it is a product and in which it acts as an agent – and its own discursive character as 'logos', that is, as itself a literary artifact composed of language and thus demanding literary (formal) analysis." On the same concept, see also Gabrielle Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 65.1 (1990): 59-86.

[5] The *Orlando furioso* was the most widely read book in Europe during the sixteenth century. On the *Furioso*'s sixteenth century reception, see Daniel Javitch, *Proclaiming a Classic: The Canonization of "Orlando Furioso"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

[6] Jenny Sharpe, "The Unspeakable Limits of Rape: Colonial Violence and Counterinsurgency," in Edmund Burke and David Prochaska, ed., *Genealogies of Orientalism: History, Theory, Politics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 215-244.

This duality presents a complex and intertwined relationship between text and context, which needs to be investigated in its peculiar historic appearance and existence as its position in space and time makes it entirely unique.[7]

My investigation has been sensitive to this duality and attempts to integrate insights into the context as well as into the text of the *Furioso*. This integration itself profits from inquiries into the content as well as the form of the poem. I accordingly employed two different attitudes in this dissertation, two separate but interdependent gazes that can offer due respect to the complexity inherent to cultural and historical investigations of a literary text. The first is the gaze of the historian, more attentive to the ideological function of the text, its way of representing and interacting with its social environment. The second gaze adopted here is that of the literary critic, more interested in the formal aspect of the text and its intratextual and intertextual relationships. These different interests and points of view alternately led my research, mutually involving each other, in a dynamic that recalls the musical technique of counterpoint, so beloved by Said and Orientalism.

Believing, as Spiegel does, that "at work in shaping a literary text is a host of unstated desires, beliefs, misunderstandings, and interests which impress themselves upon the work, sometimes consciously, sometimes not, but which arise from pressures that are social and not merely intertextual," the first chapter of this dissertation has been devoted to the quest for an accurate context against which to develop my interpretative position. I searched for the specific social site of this text, able to reveal the social, political, and emotional pressures that substantiate and shape it.[8]

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[7] Sharpe, "Unspeakable Limits," 237.
[8] Spiegel, *Past*, 26.

By focusing the first chapter on selected extradiegetic digressions – commonly employed by the narrator in the *Furioso* to address the author's political concerns and to engage with the social context in which the work is embedded – I will discuss the peculiar political situation of the Italian peninsula and Ferrara, the site of invasion and contention by European powers and corruption from the inside by the rise of heresy. I will seek to offer an explanation for the author's unconventional choice to portray a defensive war against an invasion and thereby unveil the real 'enemy' for Ferrara and Italy more generally during the composition of the *Furioso* between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The portrayal of the enemy – the Saracens – within the text will be the focus of the second and third chapter, which will highlight a general process of familiarization (Westernization) of the aesthetic and moral characteristics of the Saracens, a process which manifests through the author's whitening of their skin color and his emptying of their religion of moral values. This familiarization process, by negating the others' difference and imposing the superiority of Western stereotypes on the Eastern characters, as I will highlight, exposes the colonial attitude of the text and reveals a new form of orientalism, a point of view towards the East that is driven by the desire to impose Western standards of beauty and morality on the 'others,' and no longer by the desire to demonize them as excessively different. Such a process of familiarization also allows the poem to identify the enemy – here, the Saracen invader – as similar and not 'other' and, in so doing, posits that the Turks attacking Europe with their Muslim culture are less of a threat to Italian independence or Catholic Christianity than fellow European powers or the Protestant heresy.

These chapters devote specific attention first to Angelica, the whitened Saracen princess who invades the West and its Christian knights' hearts, and Gano of Maganza, forefather of a family historically perceived as an internal enemy to France and Christianity. Being white and

Christian, Gano bridges the fiction and Ariosto's contemporary present by bridging the enemies common to each, enemies who were both aesthetically similar and Christian. As I will suggest, in the *Furioso* the portrayal of Saracens enacts a shifting process between the time of the fiction and Ariosto's own present. The shift negotiates the Saracens' religion as well as their aesthetic aspect. Indeed, just as the whitewashing of the invading Saracens recalls the major European powers threatening the independence of the small Italian states, among them the Duchy of Ferrara, so too does the Saracen religion, having been emptied of its internal values and returned as just a lack of Christianity, appears to mimic the role of the reformist movements at that time threatening Christianity – and especially Ferrara, a political entity under the influence of the Papal States – from within.

A direct consequence of the Middle Ages portrayed in the *Furioso* – a world which lacks a clear border between Christians and Saracens, a fluid space where aesthetic and moral values are shared, and individual choices are responsible for the characters' cultural identity – is the presence in the text of characters whom I will define as 'cross-border' characters, those who straddle a border – bad Christians and good Saracens – and characters who actually cross that border – good Saracens who convert. The fourth chapter focuses on two specific cross-border characters, Rodomonte – the strongest Saracen invader – and Ruggiero – the Saracen invader destined to found the dynasty of Ariosto's d'Este patrons, who falls in love with the Christian Bradamante, converts to Christianity and marries her as his foretold bride, realizing a gender reversal unique in the chivalric epic tradition. As I will demonstrate, these characters follow a precise political agenda: to identify the 'other' as a possible hidden enemy from within and enact the assimilation of the invader – a defensive colonial attitude aimed at healing – even erasing – the wound of a physical and political invasion. Indeed, Ruggiero, thanks to his mixed origin and the

familiarization process he undergoes as his Eastern qualities are reduced to mere formal membership in the Saracen army, stands exactly at the intersection between borders. His conversion, at the end of the poem, performs a sort of Western conquest over the East, in a *translatio imperi* that conquers and erases at the same time and, in Ariosto's poem, makes Ruggiero a new Aeneas.

In these chapters, my analysis is based on the belief that post-colonial theories, as suggested by Michelle Warren, are "a window that opens into any time or place where one social group dominates another – a window through which theory can travel," and that the historical period to which they can be applied is just what Jeffrey Jerome Cohen identifies as "'midcolonial': the time of 'always-already,' an intermediacy that no narrative can pin to a single moment of history in its origin or end."[9]

This defensive colonial attitude of the text finds its fundamental perpetrator in the character of Bradamante, the woman warrior chosen to be the other founder of the d'Este family, who is the focus of the fifth and last chapter of the present dissertation. By marrying Ruggiero, as I will suggest, Bradamante is the primary instrument of a colonial act which allows Charlemagne and Christianity to assimilate the invading enemy and bring new territories under their influence. As I will demonstrate, Bradamante, who undergoes a process of feminization in the second half of the poem to reenter the stereotypical gender norms that would suit her for marriage and constitute a credible female ancestor for the d'Este dynasty, is not just a metaphoric gift exchanged to embody submission – as with many medieval princesses who are reduced to objects of erotic and colonial

[9] See Michelle Warren, "Making Contact: Postcolonial Perspectives through Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regnum Britannie*," *Arthuriana* 8.4 (1998): 115-134, 115; and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *The Postcolonial Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 3. On this see also Nadia Altschul, "Postcolonialism and the Study of the Middle Ages", *«History Compass»* 4 (2008): 588-606.

desire – but is instead the active protagonist of a diplomatic act – marriage – which ties the mythical origin of the d'Este family to a colonial act of conquest.

This dissertation, just like the text it analyzes, is rooted in contemporary "desires, beliefs, misunderstandings, and interests," and reveals the *Furioso* to be permeated by a colonial attitude hitherto overlooked by Ariosto criticism.[10] In doing so, it strives to shed light on the peculiarity of Ariosto's Renaissance medievalism, on the fears and desires that permeate his poem and, therefore, on the strict relationship between the logic of the text and the logic of the time and place in which it was produced.

[10] See Introduction, 2.

Chapter 1. A defensive war: who is the enemy?

The first peculiarity of Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* is that it recounts a defensive war – one in which France, the heart of the Christian West, is being invaded by the Saracens – rather than a war of conquest or a conflict to secure the borders, as was almost always the case in the medieval Carolingian epics from which it draws. The only Carolingian epic to represent a defensive war or an invasion, is the *Chanson d'Aspremont*, a twelfth-century Old French epic that portrays Charlemagne's expedition against Agolante, king of the Saracens, and draws its title from the name of the mountain in Calabria (Italy) where the events take place.[11] Unlike the *Furioso*, however, this medieval epic is completely based on real events, portraying the historical invasion of the Italian peninsula by Spanish Muslims, who crossed the southern border of the State of the Church and were defeated in 915 at the Battle of the Garigliano by armies led by Pope John X, who, as the protector of Christianity, filled the same role as Charlemagne in the *Chanson d'Aspremont*.[12] Despite the differences in their historical bases, the *Chanson d'Aspremont* is closely connected to the *Furioso*: the *Chanson* establishes the canonical episode where a young Orlando (Rolandino in the poem) is ordained knight and undertakes the career of a hero and, moreover, this poem would be the source from which Ariosto and Matteo Maria Boiardo – author of the *Orlando Innamorato*, the chivalric epic that the *Furioso* intends to continue – both found the genealogical roots for Ruggiero and Marfisa, sibling characters who exert a key role in the *Furioso*.

[11] Subsequently, the original *canzone* had various versions and remakes within the Italian tradition, including the *Cantari d'Aspramonte* and the *Aspramonte* by Andrea da Barberino, where Galaciella, a Saracen princess who converts and gives birth to Ruggiero and Marfisa, is presented as a warrior woman. This text, and the *cantare Historia di Bradiamonte*, are the main sources for Ariosto's Bradamante. The cantare *Historia di Bradiamonte*, as I suggest in the fifth chapter, can be considered another epic poem representing a defensive war (see 139n278).

[12] Pope John X led an alliance comprised of Berengario I, Marquis of Friuli, King of Italy and Emperor of the Romans; Constantine VII, the Eastern Roman Emperor, only 10 years old at the time and supported by Zoe Karbonopsina as regent of the Byzantine Empire; and the Christian princes of southern Italy. John personally led the Christian army into battle. The victory of this Christian alliance marked the end of Arab expansion in the southern Italian peninsula.

The narrative choice to portray an invasion, while required by the choice of historical subject matter in the *Chanson d'Aspremont*, appears in the *Furioso* to deliberately mirror the particular geopolitical moment Ariosto experienced as a Christian, an Italian, and a citizen of the Duchy of Ferrara when great internal struggle jeopardized each of these domains. Such struggle is already partially foretold by Boiardo in the final octave of the *Innamorato*, which abruptly interrupts the entire work in the ninth canto of the third book:

> Mentre che io canto, o Iddio redentore,
> Vedo la Italia tutta a fiama e a foco
> Per questi Galli, che con gran valore
> Vengon per disertar non so che loco;
> Però vi lascio in questo vano amore
> De Fiordespina ardente a poco a poco;
> Un'altra fiata, se mi fia concesso,
> Racontarovi il tutto per espresso
>
> (But while I sing, redeemer God,
> I see all Italy on fire,
> Because these French – so valiant! –
> Come to lay waste who knows what land,
> So I will leave this hopeless love
> Of simmering Fiordespina.
> Some other time, if God permits,
> I'll tell you all there is to this).[13]

In a final extradiegetic move, following a pattern of narrative intervention in the proems and endings of cantos, Boiardo here emerges from the flow of the story, looks around and states his more urgent fears and concerns: the enemy is not the Saracen but the French.

But Boiardo also employs the term *Galli* (Gauls), which, in the Republican period (509–27 BCE), referred to the Celtic populations inhabiting continental Europe, in modern-day France,

[13] Matteo Maria Boiardo, *Orlando innamorato* (Milan: Garzanti, 2009; hereafter *OI*) 3.9.26. Unless otherwise noted, English translations of the *Innamorato* are from Matteo Maria Boiardo, *The Orlando Innamorato*, trans. Charles Stanley Ross (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989). As I suggest elsewhere, the interruption in Boiardo's writing is abrupt – incontrovertibly evidenced by the length of the last canto, at just 26 stanzas – but also deliberate, as demonstrated by the 'quality of the break' and the extradiegetic quality of the final stanza, making the last canto a proper chapter and stanza 26 a proper finale; see Lorenzo Filippo Bacchini, "Qualità e funzione delle chiuse di canto nell'*Orlando Innamorato*," *Rivista di letteratura italiana* 34.3 (2016): 21-35.

Belgium, Switzerland, Holland and Germany. This lexical choice is revealing. As many editions and commentators of the *Innamorato* suggest, Boiardo is in this conclusion addressing the descent of Charles VIII, King of France, into Italy and the beginning of the First Italian War (1494–1495), a conflict that pitted Maximilian I, the Holy Roman Emperor, against Charles, who claimed the throne of Naples as a descendant of Marie of Anjou.[14] The term *Galli* thus allows Boiardo to address as the enemy all the Transalpine powers, not only Charles's France, thereby voicing a more general concern over the interference of European powers in the Italian political dynamics and the potentially definitive loss of Italy's fragile political independence. Furthermore, by identifying the enemy with its classical ancestor – the Gauls, whom the Romans perceived as a barbaric, uncivilized other – Boiardo accomplishes a shift of context, from his present day to Roman times, which reframes and transforms his enemy. The France of his present day, an enemy formerly perceived as culturally similar, becomes an enemy that is in fact culturally and aesthetically divergent. The *Furioso*, as we will see, will employ a similar mechanism to shift, meld and intertwine contexts – now between the narrative and Ariosto's present moment – that will blur the distinction between text and context, literature and history.[15] Such blurs will affect the structure and content of the poem, and with it, the perception and depiction of the Saracens.

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[14] Having entered Italy en route to Asti, Charles VIII also crossed into the territories of the d'Este family, causing Boiardo, at that time Captain of Reggio, significant difficulty, as he laments in letters from the period. See Alessandro Tortoreto, "L'ottava finale dell'*Orlando Innamorato*, una lettera del Boiardo e la lirica contemporanea," in Giuseppe Anceschi, ed., *Il Boiardo e la critica contemporanea* (Florence: Olschki, 1970), 511-519.

[15] On the relationship between the "context" of historical and cultural materials and the "text" of literary narrative and themes in the *Furioso*, see Giorgio Padoan, "L'*Orlando furioso* e la crisi del Rinascimento," in Aldo Domenico Scaglione, ed., *Ariosto 1974 in America* (Ravenna: Longo, 1976), 1-29; Vittore Branca, "Ludovico non della tranquillitate," *Veltro* 19 (1975): 75-81; Albert Russell Ascoli, *Ariosto's Bitter Harmony: Crisis and Evasion in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); Alberto Casadei, *La strategia delle varianti: le correzioni storiche del terzo* Furioso (Lucca: Pacini Fazzi, 1988); Alberto Casadei, *La fine degli incanti. Vicende del poema epico-cavalleresco nel Rinascimento* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1997); Sergio Zatti, *L'ombra del Tasso. Epica e romanzo nel Cinquecento* (Milan: Mondadori, 1996); Remo Ceserani and Sergio Zatti, "Introduzione," in Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso e Cinque canti*, ed. Remo Ceserani and Sergio Zatti (Turin: UTET, 1997), 1:7-38; Remo Ceserani and Sergio Zatti, "[Introduzione a] Orlando Furioso I-XXVI," in Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso e Cinque canti*, ed. Remo Ceserani and Sergio Zatti (Turin: UTET, 1997), 1:61-79; Albert Russell Ascoli, "Ariosto and the 'Fier Pastor': Form and History in *Orlando Furioso*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 54.2 (2001): 487-522; Alberto Casadei, *Il*

But returning to the perspective offered in Boiardo's last stanza, composed toward the end of his life, can offer an interesting insight into Ariosto's social context.[16] Boiardo was Count of Scandiano, a small city near Reggio Emilia, and was a vassal of the d'Este Family, the dukes of Ferrara who were his artistic patrons and would also be Ariosto's. Boiardo died in 1494 in Reggio Emilia, the same city where his successor as the d'Este court poet was born twenty years prior. Boiardo's last years were thus Ariosto's first and the last words of Boiardo's chivalric poem would have aptly described the social context in which Ariosto began writing his own chivalric poem: a period of continuous wars and invasions, unprecedented violence and political upheaval in Europe and in Italy that was brought about not by Muslims from without, as depicted in the *Furioso*, but by other European powers from within.

In addition to the usual enemies Ferrara had to face within the peninsula – including the Papal States, the Republics of Venice and Florence, and the Duchy of Milan – the Italian peninsula throughout the early sixteenth century suffered continual invasions from within Europe, a series of seven conflicts today called the Italian Wars, fought mainly on Italian soil between 1494 and 1559, which made the peninsula the personal battlefield for Christian rulers beyond the Alps. These wars saw the King of France oppose the Holy Roman Emperor for control over Italy and supremacy over Europe: first Charles VIII against Maximilian I, then Louis XII, Francis I and Henry II against Charles V and, towards the end, Philip II, whom Charles V left in charge of Spain, Italy and the Netherlands. They came to Italy to establish protectorates and to punish and destroy, famously exemplified by the Sack of Rome in 1527, only the bloodiest of many conflicts. The war

percorso del "Furioso": ricerche intorno alle redazioni del 1516 e del 1521 (Bologna: Mulino, 2001); Albert Russell Ascoli, "Fede e scrittura: il *Furioso* del 1532," *Rinascimento*, 2nd series 43 (2003): 93-130; and Eugenio Refini, "«La Italia tutta a fiama e a foco»: storia e attualità nel poema epico-cavalleresco," in Mariangela Miotti, ed., *Rappresentare la storia: letteratura e attualità nella Francia e nell'Europa del XVI secolo* (Passignano: Aguaplano, 2017), 15-25.

[16] Boiardo (Scandiano, 1441 – Reggio nell'Emilia, 1494) composed this canto towards the end of his life and only in 1495, after his death, was the third book, which it closes, finally published, together with the first two books, previously published in 1483.

continued through Ariosto's death in 1533 and only ended, after more than sixty years of uninterrupted war, with the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis, signed in 1559. Beyond conflicts between thrones, Ariosto's Europe was also witnessing another watershed of political and social disruption as Christianity was facing the highest wave of heresy it had ever seen, an even more insidious invasion from inside. The Protestant Reform beginning in 1517 was just the last and most dangerous outcome of a much longer internal revolution preceded by Hussites in the fifteenth century, Lollards in the fourteenth, and, among others, Dulcinians, Cathars, Waldensians and Beghards in the twelfth and thirteenth. This conflict again derives from an enemy on the inside, an enemy too similar to be portrayed as a true *other*.

In Ariosto's time, Europe also faced an external invasion by the Turks pushing from the East and, consequently, the *Furioso* is full of references to the contemporary conflict. Perhaps the clearest example of such reference is the episode in which Ruggiero enters and conquers Belgrade (canto 44) – added to the poem in its third and final edition drafted between 1521 and 1532 – which closely recalls the historical event of the Ottoman conquest of Belgrade in 1521. But the structure of the work in its entirety – its dynamic, its outlook on reality and, consequently, on Christians and Saracens, its construction of the *self* and the *other* – is in fact guided by urgencies and fears much closer to the poet and the Este family than the Ottomans. While the conflict between Christians and Muslims was certainly a current issue for Ariosto, the relationship with the East had changed since the Early Middle Ages. For instance, some Muslim countries had allied with Christian countries and, since the Late Middle Ages, personalities like Saladin had been praised for their liberality in popular works such as the *Novellino*, Giovanni Boccaccio's *Amorosa visione* and *Decameron*, and Dante Alighieri's *Convivio* and *Commedia*, where Saladin is placed among the

'Great Spirits', in Limbo.[17] Even important humanists of the generation preceding Ariosto, those who experienced the Turkish conquest of Constantinople in 1453, praised the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II who had just brought an end to the Byzantine Empire. Likewise with two important prelates, who were both advocates for a new crusade against the Turks: Cardinal Basilios Bessarion envisioned Mehmed as another Alexander the Great in his bellicose orations to the Italian princes against the Turks and Enea Silvio Piccolomini, at the time Pope Pius II, presented Mehmed as a new Constantine in his famous letter to him.[18] Among other important evidence of the shift towards a positive perception of Turks in Ariosto's time is Paolo Giovio's *Commentario delle cose dei Turchi*, published in Venice in 1532, the same year of the last edition of the *Furioso*. The work, which, as Marina Formica notes, presents the Ottomans as an enemy "fiero e coraggioso, colto, inflessibile" (proud and brave, educated, inflexible) was one of the most widely read works in sixteenth-century Europe, translated into Latin, French, English, German and reprinted many times.[19]

In a dated but still instructional article, William Comfort argues Ariosto wrote at a time when "the strong crusade feeling had entirely disappeared from a worldly and sophisticated public."[20] More importantly, he was writing for patrons who for generations had shown scant interest in new crusades. In fact, despite Pius's many attempts to organize a crusade against the

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[17] See Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, ed. Vittore Branca (Turin: Einaudi, 2016); Dante Alighieri, *Convivio*, ed. Gianfranco Fioravanti (Milan: Mondadori, 2019), 4.9.14; and Dante Alighieri, *The Inferno*, trans. Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander (New York: Random House, 2000), canto 4.

[18] For the text of Cardinal Bessarione's orations, see Scipione Ammirato, *Orazioni* [...] *a diversi principi intorno ai preparimenti che s'avrebbono a farsi contra la potenza del Turco. Aggiuntiovi nel fine le lettere & orazioni di Monsignor Bessarione Cardinal Niceno scritte a Principi d'Italia* (Florence: Filippo Giunti, 1598). For the text of Piccolomini's letter to Mehmed, see Pius, *Lettera a Maometto II (Epistola ad Mahumetem)*, ed. Giuseppe Toffanin (Naples: Pironti, 1953). For an English translation, see Pius, *Epistola ad Mahomatem II / Epistle to Mohammed II*, trans. Albert Baca (New York: Peter Lang, 1990).

[19] Marina Formica, *Lo specchio turco. Immagini dell'Altro e riflessi del Sé nella cultura italiana d'età moderna* (Rome: Donzelli, 2012), 40, my translation.

[20] See William Wistar Comfort, "The Saracens in Italian Epic Poetry," *PMLA* 59.4 (1944): 882-911, 901-902.

Ottoman Turks occupying Costantinople,[21] Borso d'Este (1413–1471), the first duke of Ferrara and uncle to Ariosto's patrons Ippolito I (1479–1520) and Alfonso I (1476–1534), always refused to participate.[22] Even Venice, which in the late fifteenth century suffered several unexpected invasions by the Turks – seven incursions just between 1470 and 1479, directed mainly towards the northeastern region of Friuli – had only mild interest in war against the Ottomans and instead pursued a policy of peaceful coexistence, notwithstanding exhortations by successive popes to participate in a crusade against them.[23] By the beginning of the sixteenth century, moreover, the Ottoman empire had shifted its expansionist aims beyond Italy, instead directing its military efforts both eastward – against the Mamluks, who had occupied the Holy Land in 1517 (just one year after the first edition of the *Furioso*), and the Persians – and also westward, against Hungary (the battle of Mohacs, 1526) and, later, Austria, which would see Vienna besieged in 1529 and 1532.

In Ariosto's time, Ferrara and Italy at large were both pressured by more contingent political and religious problems. Italy and Christianity were being attacked and invaded from within – not by some far-off Saracens, the cultural or ethnic *other*, but instead by those who were similar. And yet the conflict between Christians and Saracens in the *Furioso* does remain a *topos* used to recall Charlemagne's time and to address the contemporary preoccupation with the Turks,[24] suggesting that Ariosto's particular manner of intertwining this conflict with Italian

[21] With the papal bull *Vocavit nos*, Pius II convened a conference of the representatives of the Christian rulers in Mantua in 1458, to take common action against the Ottoman Turks who, under the leadership of Mohammed II (1432–1481), had conquered Constantinople and were about to take possession of the entire Byzantine Empire. To this end, on 19 January 1459, the Pope also established a new chivalric religious order, the Order of Our Lady of Bethlehem. The congress failed and the crusade was never undertaken.

[22] After receiving the feuds of Modena and Reggio as Duke in 1452 by the Emperor Frederick III, Borso was appointed first Duke of Ferrara by Pope Paul II in 1471. Before Borso, under Niccolò III (1383-1441) and Leonello (1407-1450), Ferrara was a marquisate, before which, under Alberto V (1347-1393) and Niccolò II (1338-1388), it had been a *signoria*.

[23] Mustafa Soykut, *Image of the "Turk" in Italy: A History of the "Other" in Early Modern Europe: 1453-1683* (Berlin: Schwarz, 2001), 54-56. See also Carlo Dionisotti, *Geografia e storia della letteratura italiana* (Turin: Einaudi, 1999), 201-226.

[24] On the literary uses of the conflict between Christians and Saracens, see Giovanni Ricci, *Ossessione turca: in una retrovia cristiana dell'Europa moderna* (Bologna: Mulino, 2002); Giovanni Ricci, *I Turchi alle porte* (Bologna:

contemporary political issues is even more indicative of his interest, his urgencies and his preoccupations. One such example is in the seventeenth canto, a canto particularly charged with contemporaneous political and social tensions.[25]

In the proem to this canto, Ariosto explains the Saracen invasion as a punishment of God for Frankish sins (17.1-6). After cataloging the historical tyrants and barbaric populations supposedly sent by God to punish the sins of humanity (17.1-3), Ariosto touches on present and more urgent matters:

> Di questo abbiàn non pur al tempo antiquo,
> ma ancora al nostro, chiaro esperimento,
> quando a noi, greggi inutili e mal nati,
> ha dato per guardian lupi arrabbiati:
>
> a cui non par ch'abbi a bastar lor fame,
> ch'abbi il lor ventre a capir tanta carne;
> e chiaman lupi di più ingorde brame
> da boschi oltremontani a divorarne.
> Di Trasimeno l'insepulto ossame
> e di Canne e di Trebia poco parne
> verso quel che le ripe e i campi ingrassa,
> dov'Ada e Mella e Ronco e Tarro passa.
>
> Or Dio consente che noi siàn puniti
> da populi di noi forse peggiori,
> per li multiplicati et infiniti
> nostri nefandi, obbrobrïosi errori
>
> (A clear example of His wrath to prove,
> Our evil ways thus punishing betimes;
> And to us, sheep-like, futile and unshriven,
> Ferocious wolves as guardians has given?
>
> Their hunger, it appears, is unabated,
> However full of flesh their bellies are,
> And ultramontane wolves, likewise unsated,
> Come prowling down from forest-lands afar.
> The many bones by Trasimene, ill-fated,

Mulino, 2008); Giovanni Ricci, *Appello al turco: i confini infranti del Rinascimento* (Rome: Viella, 2011); and Formica, *Specchio*.

[25] On the political and social dimensions of this canto, see Ascoli, "Ariosto and the Fier Pastor"; and Matteo Di Gesù, "La crisi italiana, i turchi, l'Altro. Una lettura del XVII canto dell'*Orlando furioso*." *Allegoria* 30.77 (2018): 7-26, 20.

Or those at Cannae or at Trebbia,
Less fertile make the soil than those which lie
Where Adda, Mella, Ronco, Tar flow by.

Now God consents that we should punished be,
By other races who perhaps are worse,
For all our manifold iniquity).[26]

Through a series of literary references – the most direct of which include canto 27 of Dante's *Paradiso* and Francesco Petrarca's canzone *Italia mia, benché il parlar sia indarno*, in addition to the passage of the *Innamorato* treated above[27] – Ariosto critiques Italian rulers and, more specifically, Pope Julius II, who called Swiss mercenaries into Italy after the battle of Ravenna in 1512. He recalls the famous battles of Trasimeno, Cannae, and Trebbia, comparing the bloodbath caused by Hannibal in his invasion of the Italian peninsula during the Second Punic War (218-202 BCE) to the more recent and seemingly more gruesome Wars of Italy.

The canto continues with the Homeric story-within-a-story of Norandino and the ogre. Told to Grifone, Origille and Martano by a knight upon their arrival in Damascus, this story is the continuation of one of Boiardo's interrupted episodes and recounts how Norandino, king of Damascus, had freed many of his people from an ogre's cave with the same trick Odysseus had used against Polyphemus. All the men, disguised as sheep and goats, managed to flee from the ogre-shepherd's control – but not Norandino's beloved Lucina, whom the ogre ties naked to a rock, to be later saved by Mandricardo and Gradasso. After presenting the recounting of this story, the

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[26] All quotations of the poem are taken from Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966). Translations are from Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso: The Frenzy of Orlando; A Romantic Epic*, trans. Barbara Reynolds (London: Penguin, 1975). Here, 17.3-5.

[27] See Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, trans. Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander, ed. Robert Hollander (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 27:55-59: "In vesta di pastor lupi rapaci / si veggion di qua sù per tutti i paschi: / o difesa di Dio, perché pur giaci? / Del sangue nostro Caorsini e Guaschi / s'apparecchian di bere" ("Ravenous wolves in shepherds' clothing / can be seen, from here above, in every pasture. / O God our defender, why do you not act? / Cahorsines and Gascons prepare to drink our blood"). See also Francesco Petrarca, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The* Rime sparse *and Other Lyrics*, trans. and ed. Robert Durling (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 128.39-41: "Or dentro ad una gabbia / fiere selvagge et mansuete gregge / s'annidan sì che sempre il miglior geme" ("Now within the same cage savage beasts and gentle flocks lie down, so that the better must always groan"). For further insight on the intertexts and literary sources of this proem see Ascoli, "Ariosto and the Fier Pastor."

narrator carries out a lengthy digression (17.74-79), another extradiegetic moment that Ariosto uses to address his political concerns and to engage with the social context in which his work – and especially this canto – is embedded. Three different levels of the text intertwine in this digression: the medieval conflict between Christians and Saracens, the contemporary conflict with the Turks and the conflict among the European powers over the control of Italy, as exemplified in octaves 74 and 75:

> Dove abbassar dovrebbono la lancia
> in augumento de la 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 Tedeschi, a far più degno acquisto;
> che quanto qui cercate è già di Cristo.
>
> Se Cristianissimi esser voi volete,
> e voi altri Catolici nomati,
> perché di Cristo gli uomini uccidete?
> perché de' beni lor son dispogliati?
> Perché Ierusalem non riavete,
> che tolto è stato a voi da' rinegati?
> Perché Costantinopoli e del mondo
> la miglior parte occupa il Turco immondo?
>
> (17.74-75: No longer now defenders of the faith,
> With one another Christian knights contend,
> Destroying in their enmity and wrath
> Those few who still believe; make now an end,
> You Spaniards; Frenchmen, choose another path;
> Switzers and Germans, no more armies send.
> For here the territory you would gain
> Belongs to Christ; His kingdom you profane.
>
> If 'the most Christian' rulers you would be,
> And 'Catholic' desire to be reputed,
> Why do you slay Christ's men? Their property
> Why have you sacked, and their belongings looted?
> Why do you leave in dire captivity
> Jerusalem, by infidels polluted?
> Why do you let the unclean Turk command
> Constantinople and the Holy Land?)

We can notice here that the conflict between Christians and Saracens, the traditional opposition that undergirds the medieval chivalric epics, is just an excuse, a tool to mask and at the same time to confront more contemporary and urgent problems. The rhetoric of the crusades remains present, but the attention is not on the *other* but, instead, on the *same*.

It is thus an internal issue, an invasion from within, rather than from without. The idea of the Crusades is a device employed to highlight the internal conflicts and fragmentation of Europe and Christianity, laying particular focus on the subjugation of Italy by the European powers,[28] as seen in the following octave:

> O d'ogni vizio fetida sentina,
> dormi, Italia imbriaca, e non ti pesa
> ch'ora di questa gente, ora di quella
> che già serva ti fu, sei fatta ancella?
>
> (17.76: Ah! wretched Italy, asleep you lie,
> In drunken stupor, fallen subject to
> This and that other nation who were once
> Your slaves, your subjects, your dominions?)

Ariosto's main concern, legible in the reference to the European powers, appears to be the subjugation of Italy by peoples previously enslaved by Italian dominance, specifically Spain, France and Germany. He recalls the Roman period, when these other powers were subjugated, when Italy was united and independent, even able to conquer other territories, when Italy was the center of the Roman Empire, with Charlemagne's empire ostensibly its successor.

The digression concludes with a plea to Pope Leo X, addressed as "Pastor," for his intervention in defense of his "flock":

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[28] As Matteo Di Gesù notes, the idea of invoking a Christian coalition against the Turks to divert the attention of European powers away from Italy was not uncommon in Ariosto's time, and can be found in the work of, among others, Veronica Gambara, Lodovico Domenichi, Gian Giorgio Trissino and Ludovico Paterno; see Di Gesù, "Crisi," 20. For an overview of the presence of the theme of the war against the Turks in Italian poetry between the fall of Constantinople and the end of the wars of Italy, see Di Gesù, "Crisi," 18-21; and Chiara Natoli, "Classicismo politico. Palinsesti petrarcheschi nella lirica civile italiana del Cinquecento (1525-1565)" (dissertation, Università degli studi di Palermo / Université Grenoble Alpes, 2017), 251-273.

Tu, gran Leone, a cui premon le terga
de le chiavi del ciel le gravi some,
non lasciar che nel sonno si sommerga
Italia, se la man l'hai ne le chiome.
Tu sei Pastore; e Dio t'ha quella verga
data a portare, e scelto il fiero nome,
perché tu ruggi, e che le braccia stenda,
sí che da lupi il grege tuo difenda

(17.79: And you, great Leo, bearing on your back
St Peter's burden, do not still allow
Fair Italy to sleep in sloth for lack
Of your strong arm to pull her from the slough.
You are the Shepherd: from the wolves' attack
Defend your flock; stretch forth your right arm now.
Like your proud name, chosen for you by God,
Be leonine and worthy of your rod).

In a stanza that closely echoes Petrarch's *Spirto gentil, che quelle membra reggi* and Dante's *Paradiso*,[29] Ariosto directly addresses the pope whose rule coincided with the composition of the *Furioso* and whose imprimatur authorized the first and the second editions of the *Furioso* in 1516 and 1521.[30] Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici, who ruled as pope Leo X between 1513 and 1521, was a monarch with secular power, as recalled just one stanza prior by the reference to the Donation of Constantine:

Quel ch'a te dico, io dico al tuo vicino
Tedesco ancor; là le richezze sono,
che vi portò da Roma Costantino:
portonne il meglio, e fe' del resto dono

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[29] On Dante, see n27. For the Petrarchan allusion, see Petrarca, *Lyric Poems* 53.10-23: "Che s'aspetti non so, né che s'agogni / Italia, che suoi guai non par che senta, / vecchia oziosa et lenta; / dormirà sempre et non fia chi la svegli? / Le man l'avess' io avolto entro' capegli! / […] / [M]a non senza destino a le tue braccia / che scuoter forte et sollevar la ponno, / è or commesso il nostro capo Roma. // Pon man in quella venerabil chioma / securamente, et ne le treccie sparte, / sì che la neghittosa esca del fango" ("What Italy expects or yearns for I do not know, for she does not seem to feel her woes, being old, idle, and slow. Will she sleep forever, and will no one ever awaken her? Might I have my hand clutched in her hair! […] [B]ut not without destiny is our head, Rome, now entrusted to your arms, which can shake her strongly and raise her up. Put your hand into those venerable locks confidently and into those unkempt tresses, so that this neglectful one may come out of the mud").

[30] For more on the Pope's licenses, see Giuseppe Agnelli and Giuseppe Ravegnani, *Annali delle edizioni ariostee* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1933); and Michele Catalano, *Vita di Ludovico Ariosto, ricostruita su nuovi documenti* (Geneva: Olschki, 1930).

(17.78: And to your German neighbours now I say
What I have said to you: look to the East.
The wealth which Constantine once took away
From Rome lies there; he portioned off the best
And the remainder gave into our sway).

But Leo was also the spiritual leader of Christianity, the 'Vicar of Christ' represented with the metaphor of the shepherd.[31] The author's plea for action, then, is a request for intervention in the Wars of Italy and, simultaneously, a demand to close Christian ranks and defend Christianity, as the last verse of the stanza specifies, and not a request to organize a new Crusade, as scholarship has occasionally assumed. In addition, analyzing Ariosto's word choice, one can also note how the word *sonno* (sleep, torpor), works both ways as well, because it refers both to the impotence of the immobile Italian states and also to the 'sleep of reason,' which can lead people to lose their faith and turn to heresy.[32] A good shepherd needs to defend his sheep but also needs to guard against losing them, as the story of the ogre clearly demonstrates.

In fact, the Lutheran reformation had already invaded the peninsula and the d'Este territories were not immune, as shown by the fierce reaction of the Roman Curia to a letter sent by the Duke of Ferrara, Alfonso I, to the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, containing injurious remarks against Leo X. The letter was published in Ferrara in November 1521, the same year as the second edition of the *Furioso*,[33] and the response from the Curia (January 6, 1522), addresses Alfonso as a tyrant and enemy of the Church and enumerates a long list of accusations, including the falsification of his brother Ippolito's will[34] and tampering with the trial of his brothers Giulio

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[31] On the relationship between this metaphor, the cannibal ogre of Norandino's story, and Ariosto's critique of Leo X, see Ascoli, "Ariosto and the Fier Pastor."

[32] Ariosto's introduction of the semantic area regarding the act of sleeping is of course also part of the Petrarchan citation; see n29 above.

[33] Both Alfonso's letter and the response from the Curia can be found in Antonio Cappelli, ed., *Lettere di Ludovico Ariosto* (Milan: Hoepli, 1887), letters 158-175.

[34] The supposed falsification allowed Alfonso to inherit from his brother, the Archbishop Ippolito I, various territories claimed by the State of the Church.

and Ferrante.[35] The accusations are very specific and also charge Alfonso with being a follower of Martin Luther and facilitating the dissemination of his teachings:

> Volse [Alfonso] implicitamente diminuire l'authorità pontificia, accostandose alla venenata doctrina de l'heretico Martino Luther, la quale però sin l'anno passato per molti giorni fece publice predicare in Ferrara et anchora in Venetia, ben che non tanto apertamente, dal suo barbato frate Andrea da Ferrara de l'ordine d'heremitani, che anchora maiori errori publicò delli lutherani. Onde mandando il PP. [Papa] a comandarli lo facesse pigliare, epso obedire nol volse, ma lo fece nascondere: colpa anchora maiore delle altre per essere causa d'heresìa, per la qual sola meritava essere privato [di Ferrara] et severissime punito
>
> ([Alfonso] implicitly wanted to diminish the papal authority, approaching the poisoned doctrine of the heretic Martin Luther, religion which, however, since the past year for many days, he publicly allowed bearded monk Andrea from Ferrara, of the hermits' order, to preach in Ferrara and again in Venice, even if not so openly. This Monk also spread many errors of the Lutherans. Because of this, [the Pope] commanded Alfonso to seize him, but he would not obey, and he hid him, an even greater guilt than that of the others because it foments heresy, for which alone he deserved to be deprived [of Ferrara] and very severely punished).[36]

The curial intent is certainly defamatory, but the accusation need not to be true to stand as a proof of the increasing presence of heresy in the d'Este territories and, more importantly, is that it was believable enough to be used as an accusation.

Since the rule of Niccolò III d'Este (1383–1441), which saw the founding of the University of Ferrara in 1391, and even more so under Leonello (1441–1450),[37] Borso (1450–1471) and Ercole (1471–1505), Ferrara had been an important humanistic cultural center and political hub,[38]

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[35] In the first year of his rule, Alfonso uncovered a plot against himself and his brother Ippolito by their other brother Ferrante and half-brother Giulio. Ferrante and Giulio were charged with lèse-majesté and high treason and sentenced with the death penalty, commuted to life sentences. Ferrante died in his cell after thirty-four years, while Giulio endured fifty-three years of imprisonment, until his pardon in 1559.

[36] Cappelli, *Lettere*, document 172, my translation.

[37] It was Leonello who, in 1442, gave the institution a definitive structure, to become a fully operational university with courses in canon law, logic, philosophy and medicine; see Paul Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 100.

[38] See Giuseppe Pagagno and Amedeo Quondam, *La corte e lo spazio: Ferrara estense* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1982).

visited and inhabited by people from across Europe, including areas that bred potentially dangerous heresies, as exemplified by the presence of a substantial Hungarian community in Ferrara during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with particularly strong links to the academic environment.[39] Hungary had enjoyed a special connection with the Este family, even predating their rule of Ferrara, since at least 1234, when Beatrice d'Este, daughter to Azzo VII, became the third wife of Andrew II King of Hungary.[40] A connection that was interrupted during the fourteenth century but that was strengthened throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries through cultural exchanges and new marriages, culminating in Ariosto's time with the marriage of Beatrix of Aragon to Matthias Corvinus in 1475 and the 1487 election of the eight-year-old Ippolito d'Este (Ariosto's future patron) as Archbishop of Esztergom, the most important Hungarian diocese.[41] During the fifteenth century, the friendship between Janos Vitez, high-prelate and notary-in-chief of the Royal Hungarian chancellery, and Guarino of Verona, Leonello's tutor and later the professor of oratory, Latin and Greek at the University of Ferrara,[42] brought to Ferrara many young Hungarians who came to be trained as officials and as good Christians,[43] leading to the impressive tenure of rector at the University of Ferrara by a Hungarian (Iacobus Zuhafen Ungarus) in 1495.[44]

But fifteenth-century Hungary was fertile ground for the sermons of Jan Hus and the diffusion of the Hussite heresy distressed the Hungarian kings, who faced revolution and disorder but never devised any functional solution to eliminate the problem. This heritage does not mean

[39] Enrica Guerra, "The Hungarian Community in Ferrara at the Estes Court (15-16th Centuries)," *Journal of Literature and Art Studies* 2.5 (2012): 567-574, 570.
[40] See Andrea Castagnetti, *La società ferrarese: secoli XI – XII* (Venice: Libreria Universitaria, 1991); and Luciano Chiappini, *Gli Estensi: mille anni di storia* (Ferrara: Corbo, 2001).
[41] Ippolito lived and studied in Hungary for seven years before returning to Ferrara.
[42] The friendship was facilitated by the humanist Pier Paolo Vergerio, who spent the last twenty-five years of his life in Hungary, at the Court of Sigismund of Luxemburg, and who knew Guarino because both had been students of Giovanni Conversini, together with Vittorino of Feltre and Leonardo Bruni, among others.
[43] See Guerra, "Hungarian Community," 570-572.
[44] Giuseppe Pardi, *Lo studio di Ferrara nei secoli XV e XVI* (Ferrara: Zuffi, 1903), 70.

every Hungarian who came to Ferrara was a Hussite – a fact proven by the complete absence of any mention of their religious ideas from the city chronicles and of any Hungarian from the *Libro dei Giustiziati*, the record that names all people executed in Ferrara between 1441 and 1577 – but delineates a dangerous area of permeability in the d'Este Court and academic environment.

Ferrara was, therefore, a city familiar with the presence of an *other* who is perceived as familiar – indeed, as similar.[45] One such *other* had already been introduced into Ferrara with the arrival of Renée of Valois-Orléans, the second child of King Louis XII of France and, following her 1528 marriage, wife of Ercole II d'Este, who would become duke in 1534. Renée was a committed Calvinist and her arrival in Ferrara was perceived by conservatives something of an invasion: indeed, she is the perfect example of an enemy that can embody both political and religious concerns while representing an *other* who is not esthetically or culturally different but similar. As an *other self*, the persona of Renée exhibits characteristics that associate her uncannily to Angelica's character, which I will examine in later chapters with respect to Renée and to some of the most important Christian and Saracen characters present in the *Furioso*.

Further textual evidence of the real urgencies behind the social logic of this text, evidence of who the enemy really is, can be found by simply perusing some of the proems to the cantos in the *Furioso*, for example, 14.1-10; 15.1-2; 34.1-3; 36.1-9 and 40.1-4. Proems such as these relate to problems closely connected to the specific circumstances affecting Ferrara and the d'Este family and, together with the proems overall, they form an important component of the "structural means" that Ariosto uses "for representing within his poem – in continuity with its fictions – the historical violence that threatens him, his city, his patron," as Albert Ascoli has highlighted in a famous

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[45] For example, the author of the *Malleus maleficarum* was particularly preoccupied with the Hussites. See Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); and Michael Bailey, *Battling Demons: Witchcraft, Heresy, and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).

article precisely on the seventeenth canto.[46] The proem to the fifteenth canto, which is strictly connected to the proem to the fortieth, offers a particularly resonant example of Ariosto's more urgent concerns:

> Fu il vincer sempremai laudabil cosa,
> vincasi o per fortuna o per ingegno:
> gli è ver che la vittoria sanguinosa
> spesso far suole il capitan men degno;
> e quella eternamente è glorïosa,
> e dei divini onori arriva al segno,
> quando, servando i suoi senza alcun danno,
> si fa gl'inimici in rotta vanno.
>
> La vostra, Signor mio, fu degna loda,
> quando al Leone, in mar tanto feroce,
> ch'avea occupata l'una e l'altra proda
> del Po, da Francolin sino alla foce,
> faceste sí, ch'ancor che ruggir l'oda,
> s'io vedrò voi, non tremerò alla voce.
> Come vincer si de', ne dimostraste;
> ch'uccideste i nemici, e noi salvaste
>
> (15.1-2: To win was always deemed a splendid thing,
> Whether it be by fortune or by skill.
> True, bloody victories less honour bring,
> While to eternity the praises will
> Resound and all the gods the glory sing
> Of the commander who forbears to spill
> The blood of his own men, but victory
> Costless achieves and routs the enemy.
>
> Your victory, my lord, deserved all praise,
> When both the margins of the river Po,
> From Francolino to the stormy seas,
> The Lion held and you then tamed him so
> That if his mighty roar he still may raise,
> When you are there no terror I shall know.
> You showed us how to be victorious:
> Death to the enemy and life to us).

[46] Ascoli, "Ariosto and the Fier Pastor," 497.

Ariosto refers to the Battle of Polesella (1509), a battle between Ferrarese ground forces, led by Alfonso and Ippolito, and Venetian naval forces, fought on the banks of the Po River. The battle was overwhelmingly victorious for the d'Este, who captured the few Venetian boats they failed to sink. Ariosto narrates this historical event with further details in the proems to the thirty-sixth and the fortieth cantos (36.1-9 and 40.1-4) and leaves its traces throughout the poem, as in 3.57 and 46.97.[47] The battle was very important for the Este family and for Ariosto's encomiastic project and it is also important for this research, as it was fought against an enemy as culturally and religiously similar as can be imagined,[48] who was trying to invade Ferrara, just as the Saracens in the *Furioso* invaded Paris.

The references to contemporary issues and events discussed above form but one of the many avenues of the *Furioso* through which Ariosto directly addresses his own fears and concerns, letting the context rise to the level of text, almost usurping its place, pushed by the "pressure of historical crisis."[49] This political and religious crisis permeates the whole work,[50] occasionally apparent in extradiegetic parts of the narration (proems, digressions, endings of cantos), for the most part works silently to reshape the relation between text and context. Particularly productive for this operation of reworking is the relationship between Christians and Saracens: the perception, the depiction, and the function of the Saracens in the *Furioso*. Though they can be more subtly understood by a diachronic exploration of the changes between the first and the last edition of the

[47] On this historical event and its representation in the *Furioso*, see Nicolò Maldina, *Ariosto e la battaglia della Polesella. Guerra e poesia nella Ferrara di inizio Cinquecento* (Mulino: Bologna, 2017).
[48] Ferrara and Venice will find themselves allied at a later moment of the Italian Wars, when the d'Este return the boats captured at Polesella to Venice.
[49] Ascoli, "Ariosto and the Fier Pastor," 494.
[50] On the different involvement of the historical context in respect to the different editions of the *Furioso*, see Ascoli, "Ariosto and the Fier Pastor"; Ascoli, *Ariosto's Bitter Harmony*; Lanfranco Caretti, *Antichi e moderni* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976), 103-109; Casadei, *Strategia*; and Edoardo Saccone, "Prospettive sull'ultimo Ariosto," *MLN* 98 (1983): 55-69. More synoptic studies include Giulio Ferroni, *Ariosto* (Rome: Salerno, 2008); Stefano Jossa, *Ariosto* (Bologna: Mulino, 2009); and Sergio Zatti, *Leggere l'«Orlando furioso»* (Bologna: Mulino, 2016).

work,[51] the most pressing concerns and anxieties legible in Ariosto's final edition were feelings diffused throughout Italy, shared by citizens and rulers of the other Italian states, and had a long history rooted in culture, as seen in the intertexts of the passages previously analyzed. These feelings also emerge in the pages of works contemporary to the *Furioso*, especially those more concerned with ongoing issues. The best example, outside proper historical writings that discuss such topics,[52] is Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*, composed in 1513, initially circulated in manuscript form under its Latin title *De Principatibus*, and finally printed in 1532, five years after his death.

Machiavelli faced the same crisis as Ariosto and his political treatise is just a different embodiment and reaction to the same issues. What Ariosto sublimates through poetical invention Machiavelli tackles directly, with a lucid rational prose that frames the problem, exposes its causes, and proposes a solution. The cause of the problem, for Machiavelli, is the weakness and instability of Italian states due to the lack of leadership skills among its rulers. The solution is the titular

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[51] For a deeper analysis of the changes introduced between the first and the last edition of the *Furioso* and the correlation to the dramatic shifts in Italy's situation between 1526 and 1532, see Caretti, *Antichi*, 103-109; Casadei, *Strategia*; Walter Moretti, *L'ultimo Ariosto* (Bologna: Pàtron, 1977); Walter Moretti, "L'ideale ariostesco di un'Europa pacificata e unita e la sua crisi nel terzo Furioso," in June Salmons and Walter Moretti, ed., *The Renaissance in Ferrara and Its European Horizons / Il Rinascimento a Ferrara e i suoi orizzonti europei* (Cardiff/Ravenna: University of Wales Press/Girasole, 1984), 233-244; and Saccone, "Prospettive."

[52] The most important of these historical writings is probably Francesco Guicciardini's *Storia d'Italia*, composed between 1537 and 1540 and expressing similar feelings and concern: the inability of the European powers to stop fighting with each other – or, he implies, over Italy – and join forces to contain Turkish expansion. See 1.13.9 in Francesco Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Silvana Seidel Menchi (Turin: Einaudi, 1971), 552: "Ancora che la tregua universale fusse stata accettata da tutti, e che tutti contro a' turchi, con ostentazione e magnificenza di parole, si dimostrassino, se gli altri concorrevano, di essere pronti con tutte le forze loro a causa tanto giusta, nondimeno, essendo reputato da tutti il pericolo incerto e molto lontano, e appartenente piú agli stati dell'uno che dell'altro, ed essendo molto difficile e che ricercava tempo lungo l'introdurre uno ardore e una unione tanto universale, prevalevano i privati interessi e comodità: in modo che queste pratiche non solo non si condusseno a speranza alcuna ma non si trattorono se non leggiermente e quasi per cerimonia." For a translation see, Francesco Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, trans. Austin Park Goddard (London: John Towers, 1753-1756), 7:102-103, italics original: "and the universal Truce had been accepted by all, and every one with ostentation and magnific Speeches professed themselves ready in so just a Cause to engage with all their Forces against the *Turks*, if they had the Concurrence of the rest, yet as the Danger was by all accounted uncertain, and at a great Distance, and concerned the States of one more than those of the other, and as it was very difficult, and required a long Time to introduce so universal an Ardor and Union, private Interests and Conveniencies got the upper Hand so far that not only these Designs were never in a Forwardness to be put in Execution, but hardly ever came under Debate but in a slighting Manner, and as it were out of Ceremony."

model of Prince, a leader able to face the crisis, which the entirety of Machiavelli's treatise aims to form. The problem – the enemy – is revealed only at the end, in the last chapter of the work, Chapter 26, entitled "Exortatio ad capessendam Italiam in libertatemque a barbaris vindicandam" (Exhortation to Liberate Italy from the Barbarians). By choosing the Latin world *barbarus* (barbarian), Macchiavelli employs the same technique of shifting contexts used by Boiardo, as seen in the *Innamorato* above.

The title is more than explanatory, as it turns out, and the last lines of the chapter and, therefore, of the entire work clarify Machiavelli's feelings:

> Non si debba, adunque, lasciare passare questa occasione, acciò che l'Italia, dopo tanto tempo, vegga uno suo redentore. Né posso esprimere con quale amore e' fussi ricevuto in tutte quelle provincie che hanno patito per queste illuvioni esterne; con che sete di vendetta, con che ostinata fede, con che pietà, con che lacrime. Quali porte se li serrerebbano? quali populi li negherebbano la obedienza? quale invidia se li opporrebbe? quale Italiano li negherebbe l'ossequio? A ognuno puzza questo barbaro dominio. Pigli, adunque, la illustre casa vostra questo assunto con quello animo e con quella speranza che si pigliano le imprese iuste; acciò che, sotto la sua insegna, e questa patria ne sia nobilitata, e, sotto li sua auspizi, si verifichi quel detto del Petrarca:
>
> Virtù contro a furore
> Prenderà l'arme, e fia el combatter corto;
> Ché l'antico valore
> Nell'italici cor non è ancor morto
>
> (Thus, one should not let this opportunity pass, for Italy, after so much time, to see her redeemer. I cannot express with what love he would be received in all those provinces that have suffered from these floods from outside; with what thirst for revenge, with what obstinate faith, with what piety, with what tears. What doors would be closed to him? What peoples would deny him obedience? What envy would oppose him? What Italian would deny him homage? This barbarian domination stinks to everyone. Then may your illustrious house take up this task with the spirit and hope in which just enterprises are taken up, so that under its emblem this fatherland may be ennobled and under its auspices the saying of Petrarch's may come true:

> Virtue will take up arms against fury,
> and make the battle short,
> because the ancient valor in Italian hearts
> is not yet dead).[53]

To close the circle, the work concludes with a citation of canzone 128 from Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, the same intertext used by Ariosto in the proem to the seventeenth canto. Such is the sign of the same cultural and political crisis: traces that impress on the texts in different ways but that permeate many Italian literary works of the time.

As Ascoli recalls,

> The *Furioso* displays its author's keen awareness of the form of cultural and political crisis that he individually, the Ferrarese society of which [Ariosto] was a part specifically, and the Italian peninsula generally were each undergoing in the first third of the sixteenth century.[54]

More specifically, Ascoli argues that in the 1516 and 1521 editions of the *Furioso*, these "fundamental, historically-determined ruptures in cultural meaning are making themselves felt at the level of form."[55] It follows, therefore, that the same ruptures can be felt in Ariosto's extradiegetic interventions – the proems, digressions, and canto endings – and that, by the 1532 edition,

> [t]he non-narrative elements of historical crisis were being increasingly, though not completely, reabsorbed into the primary narrative of the *Furioso* and specifically into the story that promotes the illusion of an unbroken and relatively untroubled link between the chivalric past and the present-day Ferrara of Ariosto and the Este family.[56]

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[53] Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1950), 77. Unless otherwise noted, English translations of *The Prince* are from Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 2nd ed., trans. Harvey Mansfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); here, p. 105.
[54] Ascoli, "Ariosto and the Fier Pastor," 487. See also Ascoli, *Ariosto's Bitter Harmony*.
[55] Ascoli, "Ariosto and the Fier Pastor," 511.
[56] Ascoli, "Ariosto and the Fier Pastor," 516.

Leaving aside the subtler evolution of these concerns between editions, I argue that the final edition of the *Furioso* textualizes the political and religious crisis of its time through the plot structure and through the characters' features and interactions. Ariosto reacts to this crisis by choosing to portray a defensive war against an invasion and, even more so, by depicting the frequently surprising relationship between the Saracens (the enemy) and the Christians.

The Middle Ages portrayed in the *Furioso* are a crossroads of different temporalities, interests and pressures that all influence the work at different levels. Ariosto effectuates a shifting process that, by intertwining the context of the story and the context of his present day, intertwine text and context and reframe the action – the story itself – and especially the enemy, transforming the expected cultural and aesthetic features of the *other*. As will be discussed in the following chapters, in fact, the Saracens, usually perceived as aesthetically and culturally *other* in medieval epics, become in the *Furioso* more similar to the Christians, similar enough to cross the border between the two cultures.[57]

[57] This process of familiarization of the Saracens is already in place in Boiardo's *Innamorato* but much less systematically and extensively than in the *Furioso*; see Jo Ann Cavallo, *The World beyond Europe in the Romance Epics of Boiardo and Ariosto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

Chapter 2. Whitening the Saracens: Medoro, Angelica, the familiarization of the other and the invasion from within[58]

No consideration of Ludovico Ariosto's most urgent preoccupations or his portrayal of the Saracens in the *Orlando furioso* can ignore the intuition that there is almost no space for blackness in the Middle Ages he portrays, no black Saracen knights, no black princesses. In descriptions of skin color, the terms *nero* (black), the archaic form *negro* or even *scuro* (dark) are used only four times across the entire poem[59]. The first instance is found in the fourteenth canto, during Agramante's reorganization of his army. Ariosto tells us Agramante is promoting some of his knights and assigning them troops left without leader: he assigns to Arganio "quei di Libicana" (those from Libicana), from what is today Libya, since the King of Libicana, "il negro Dudrinasso" (14.19: the black Dudrinasso), has died earlier. This ascription is the first mention in the *Furioso* of Dudrinasso, a character inherited from Matteo Maria Boiardo's *Orlando innamorato*, and occurs once he is already dead. Two further uses – "popul negro" (38.31: black people) and "popul nero" (44.20: black people) – refer to the Nubian soldiers guided by Astolfo in his African enterprise, but the adjective always applies to the group, not to singular individuals. A fourth and final usage describes a character from the story told to Rinaldo by a ferryman en route to Ferrara in the forty-third canto, but this is not properly a character of the *Furioso* that Ariosto is actively transfiguring, as he does not inhabit the same 'reality' in which the readers are thrown. This "Etïopo con naso e labri grossi" (43.135: Ethiopian man with big nose and lips) is nonetheless endowed with an abundance of details typical of monsters – so unique enough in their aesthetic

[58] I will use the term "whiteness" to refer either to the erasure of characters' skin color, or, more generally, to the erasure of any difference with respect to the European aesthetic stereotype. In the *Furioso*, then, the process of whitening coincides with the process of westernizing.

[59] The term *moro* ("Moor"), which appears 54 times, derives from the Greek *μαυρός*, meaning dark, and from the Latin *maurus*, meaning inhabitant of Mauritania. During the Middle Ages, however, the term was used to identify the Muslim inhabitants of Spain and North Africa, not as an adjective to describe the skin color.

features to deserve lengthier and more accurate descriptions – and his castle is conjured into existence by the magician Manto exactly where there once stood a forest, a typical site of encounters with monsters and magic. Skin color never seems like information important enough to mention in descriptions of characters from Spain, Asia, or Africa who are actively involved in advancing the plot.

The enemy is never identified by an aesthetical alterity, which makes the absence of its blackness all the more jarring the more precisely these characters are described: not casually forgotten but, it would seem purposefully omitted. Moreover, in the Middle Ages portrayed by the *Furioso*, the absence of blackness is also thrown into relief by specific statements about the whiteness that characterizes key Saracen characters, perhaps best exemplified in Medoro.

Medoro

Medoro is the Saracen foot-soldier with whom Angelica, the Saracen princess desired and pursued by the majority of the Christian and Saracen knights, falls in love. Though he comes from Libya, Medoro is portrayed as white-skinned with curly blond hair, evidenced by the detailed description of his features in his first mention in the poem:

> Medoro avea la guancia colorita
> e bianca e grata ne la età novella;
> e fra la gente a quella impresa uscita
> non era faccia più gioconda e bella:
> occhi avea neri, e chioma crespa d'oro:
> angel parea di quei del sommo coro
>
> (18.166: Medoro's cheek, so tender and so young,
> The lily and the rose displayed; in all
> That host there was no countenance among
> Their comely youth that was more beautiful.
> His eyes were black, golden his curling hair,
> As if a seraph from on high he were).

Medoro's description perfectly adheres to the aesthetical canon of Western beauty. He is compared to a seraph, an angel of the highest order, and is so handsome that he even moves his enemies to

compassion: the Scottish prince Zerbino has mercy on him precisely because of his "bel volto" (19.10: beautiful face).

Medoro's Western appearance seems to particularly concern the narrator, who repeats three times across the eighteenth and nineteenth cantos that Medoro is blond (18.166, 19.10, 19.28). But it is not just his look that is at stake, however, as his entire identity is reframed. In fact, Ariosto consistently presents Medoro as an heir to the culture of the ancient West, as Jo Ann Cavallo has recently highlighted.[60] First, he originates in "Tolomitta" (Ptolemais), an ancient port in eastern Libya (Cyrenaica) that was originally a Greek settlement in the seventh century BCE. The city was then conquered by Alexander of Macedon, became part of the Ptolemaic Hellenistic Kingdom, passed under Roman rule in 96 BCE, and was then made a Byzantine territory until the seventh century CE, when it was conquered by the Arabs and became an official part of the East. In addition to the heritage compressed into Medoro's origin, by making him the protagonist of the nocturnal expedition with his friend Cloridano, Ariosto inscribes him into a trajectory that crosses the whole classical Western literary tradition. Indeed, Cloridano and Medoro recall Homer's two friends Odysseus and Diomedes, and, even more directly, Virgil's Nisus and Euryalus and Statius's Hopleus and Dymas.[61] Natalino Sapegno, in a famous comment to his 1962 edition of the *Furioso*, more specifically notes that two plot elements in this episode – the decision of the two soldiers to enter the battlefield to bury their lord, Dardinello, and Medoro's prayer to the moon (18.184) – derive from Statius, while Virgil is the source of the description of the massacre of the Christian soldiers surprised in their sleep (18.172) as well as of the whole second half of the episode, including the arrival of Zerbino with his army, the attempt to escape by Medoro and Cloridano,

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[60] Cavallo, *World*, 32-35.

[61] For Ariosto's allusion to Hopleus and Dymas (*Thebaid* 10), see Pio Rajna, *Le fonti dell'*Orlando Furioso, 2nd ed., ed. Francesco Mazzoni (Florence: Sansoni, 1975), 253-256; and Maria Cristina Cabani, *Gli amici amanti. Coppie eroiche e sortite notturne nell'epica italiana* (Naples: Liguori, 1995), 23-25.

Medoro's injury and Cloridano's death.[62] To complete the familiarization of Medoro initiated by the specification of his origin and his behavior, his faith is also transformed: when Medoro prays for help in finding Dardinello's dead body (18.184), he does not invoke Mohammed but, like an ancient Greek or Roman, addresses the goddess of the moon directly.

Medoro, moreover, is also morally redeemed. As Maria Cristina Cabani suggests,[63] he is redeemed in comparison to the characters of Virgil – who describes Euryalus as *cupidus* – as neither he nor Zerbino seek any treasure from the war (18.182). Ariosto himself notes the difference between Cloridano and Medoro and their ancient predecessors with an ironic twist – "E ben che possan gir di preda carchi, / salvin pur sé, che fanno assai guadagno" (18.182: Though they might make away with costly spoil, / Let them now save themselves – a richer gain) – ultimately reminding the reader that his own characters are foot-soldiers without any particular fighting skills. Cabani goes so far as to conclude that "il romanzo cavalleresco non può ammettere nel suo universo ideologico l'idea di una missione eroica in cui abbia una benché minima incidenza la promessa di un compenso materiale" (the chivalric novel cannot admit in its ideological universe a heroic mission in which the incentive of material remuneration has even a minimal impact).[64] Medoro also proves to be redeemed when compared to his companion. In fact, while he decides to undertake the heroic and extremely dangerous venture to provide Dardinello with a proper burial (18.168-169), Cloridano initially tries to dissuade him (18.170) and acquiesces only later and only because of the feelings he has toward his beautiful friend (18.171). The difference between the two Saracen soldiers is, furthermore, clearly highlighted by the differences in their behavior during the massacre of the sleeping Christians. While Cloridano indiscriminately kills everyone in his

[62] See 18.188-192 and 19.3-15; and Natalino Sapegno, ed., *Orlando Furioso*, 2nd ed., by Ludovico Ariosto (Milan: Giuseppe Principato, 1962), 207.
[63] Cabani, *Amici*, 24-25
[64] See Cabani, *Amici*, 25. All translations of Cabani are my own.

path, Medoro's actions are guided by a moral distinction, as he refuses to kill the "ignobil plebe" (18.178: common rabble), the simple foot-soldiers of humble origins: an important discrimination in the world of the *Furioso* and, more generally, of all the chivalric epics, where battles are typically won through individual skirmishes between heroes – that is, the noblemen who led the armies – and not through a clash of armies. Medoro sheds no unnecessary blood.

As Cabani observes,[65] this episode also has an important intratextual counterpart, Orlando's midnight traversal of the enemy camp in the beginning of the ninth canto:

> Dormono; e il conte uccider ne può assai:
> né però stringe Durlindana mai.
>
> Di tanto core è il generoso Orlando,
> che non degna ferir gente che dorma
>
> (9.3-4: Some sleep […].
> Their lives Orlando easily could take,
> But not one move towards his sword will make.
>
> For he is chivalrous, there's no denying.
> He'd never stoop to kill a man asleep).

Cabani reads this intratextuality as a critique of Medoro and even of the Virgilian heroes – Ariosto's way of establishing the superiority of the chivalric code of behavior over ancient morality, Orlando over Cloridano and Medoro.[66] In fact, Ariosto writes that Orlando proves to be "*di tanto core*" by choosing to not kill any "*gente che dorma*." But readers will note that the opening of the same ninth canto, as with the eighteenth that introduces Medoro, is completely pervaded and mediated by the typical Ariostean irony. In the proem, usually the site of a stronger authorial presence and point of view, Ariosto can be said to provide the reader with an interpretive guide for the subsequent episode, as in the opening of the ninth canto:

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[65] Cabani, *Amici*, 28-29.
[66] Cabani, *Amici*, 25-30.

Che non può far d'un cor ch'abbia suggetto
questo crudele e traditore Amore,
poi ch'ad Orlando può levar del petto
la tanta fé che debbe al suo signore?
Già savio e pieno fu d'ogni rispetto,
e de la santa Chiesa difensore:
or per un vano amor, poco del zio,
e di sé poco, e men cura di Dio

(9.1: Once Love has gained possession of a heart,
What can this cruel traitor then not do?
See how he tears Orlando's soul apart:
So loyal once, now to his lord untrue,
So wise, so versed in every noble art,
And of the holy Church defender too,
A victim now of passion unreturned,
For God and king no longer he's concerned).

Orlando is described here as oblivious of his duties toward the emperor, God and himself: he is not crossing the Saracen camp to serve his lord, Charlemagne or God, as Medoro will, but has instead betrayed Charles and abandoned his position as first defender of France and Christianity against the Saracen invasion simply to chase Angelica, with whom he is in love. In his transgression of duty, Orlando thus betrays his ruler, his god and any chivalric code of behavior. While he had been wise before (*già savio*), he has now lost his mind, since "crudele e traditore Amore" has subjugated his heart – the same heart that Ariosto, just two stanzas below (9.3-4), identifies as behind the failure of Orlando to kill the sleeping enemies.

In reading the proem as a critique of Orlando's mental condition, then, one can surmise that Orlando not only should not have left the Christian camp or the war against the Saracens for personal profit but he should also have killed the Saracen enemies or at least engaged them in a fair fight. He should have risked his life and his immediate goal for a superior cause, like Cloridano and Medoro and their Virgilian predecessors. But due to his state of mind, the obligation to kill his enemies would have seemed to him a useless loss of time. This scene already reveals the start of Orlando's madness, which will manifest fully after the definitive loss of Angelica to Medoro

himself and will occasion his transformation from the chief paladin of France and all Christianity into a beast that uproots trees (23.134-135), destroys villages and kills any signs of life he encounters (24.4-14). This devolution also involves, as usual, the aesthetical aspect of Orlando. In leaving the Christian camp, Orlando chooses to abandon his armor emblazoned with the emblem of Almonte – demonstrating his family lineage, origin, and identity – and crosses the Saracen camp "tutto vestito a negro" (9.2: all dressed in black). Giving up his duties as a French paladin, he has lost his identity, to which the armor is strictly connected: thus, at the nadir of this process of degradation, he will rip his own clothes off his body.

The proem of the ninth canto serves as a useful interpretive pivot-point between the episode of Medoro and Cloridano and that of Orlando's traversal of the enemy camp and the parallelism of the two episodes reveals a rehabilitating effect over Medoro, who proves with respect to Orlando – or, at least, the insane version of Orlando – braver and more faithful to his God and his commander. Medoro, an African foot-soldier, is whitened and his identity is completely transformed through the process of familiarization that generally characterizes all the Saracens in the *Furioso* but that, in this particular case, reveals a specific colonial attitude. Indeed, with Medoro's exterior appearance, as with Jacqueline de Weever's conclusions concerning white Saracen princesses in medieval literature,

> more is at stake than a simple aesthetic doctrine of the ideal beauty that poets must follow[.] […] [P]oetic doctrine becomes complicitous with biases that define as inferior those who are different in race and religion, those who challenge, those who remain unconvinced of the superiority of the people who produce these ideas.[67]

[67] Jacqueline De Weever, *Sheba's Daughters: Whitening and Demonizing the Saracen Woman in Medieval French Epic* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2013), xviii.

Medoro conquers Angelica and, through his conquest, Western culture reaffirms the primacy of its values. As Medoro travels with Angelica to her realm and, in so doing, becomes king of Cathay (China), as Ariosto highlights (30.16), Medoro moreover allows Western culture to invade the East and colonize it culturally, imposing the supremacy of its values – in this case, aesthetic values – on an eastern territory. The process of whitening that Medoro experiences is necessary for him to become a colonial tool but the same process seems to have different effects on his companion, Angelica.

Angelica

The most emblematic example of whitening a Saracen in the *Furioso* is constituted by the character of Angelica, the charming Saracen princess and daughter of Galafrone, King of Cathay. She was invented by Boiardo in the *Innamorato* and plays a central role in Ariosto's poem. Analysis of Angelica usefully reveals the perception, description and function of the enemy – the 'other' – in Ariosto's work. Given that the role she exhibits in the poem – the beautiful white Saracen princess beloved by Christian knights – has its roots in the medieval Carolingian ancestors of Italian Renaissance epics, Angelica is thus a good point of reference to understand the peculiarity of the handling of her role and, more generally, of the 'other' in the *Furioso*.

The most accurate portrait of Angelica is offered by Boiardo's *Innamorato*, which the *Furioso* ostensibly continues. Her first entrance in the Italian chivalric epic is at the very beginning of the poem, when she appears in Charlemagne's court where all the Christian and Saracen knights have gathered for a joust:

> Però che in capo della sala bella
> Quattro giganti grandissimi e fieri
> Intrarno, e lor nel mezzo una donzella,
> Che era seguita da un sol cavallieri.
> Essa sembrava matutina stella

E giglio d'orto[68] e rosa de' verzieri:
In somma, a dir di lei la veritate,
Non fu veduta mai tanta beltate

(1.1.21: They saw far down the splendid hall
four fearsome and enormous giants
enter, a lady in their midst,
escorted by a single knight.
She seemed to be the morning star,
the lily and the garden rose.
In short, to tell the truth of her,
never was so much beauty seen).

Angelica comes from Cathay, in Asia, but is compared to both a morning star and a lily, comparisons generally used in relation with whiteness.

A few stanzas later, Boiardo adds further description:

Angelica, non troppo a lui lontana,
La bionda testa in su l'erba posava,
Sotto il gran pino, a lato alla Fontana:
Quattro giganti sempre la guardava.
Dormendo, non parea già cosa umana,
Ma ad angelo del cel rasomigliava.
Lo annel del suo germano aveva in dito,
Della virtù che sopra aveti odito

(1.1.42: Not far away Angelica
lay her blond head upon the grass
beneath the large pine by the spring,
four giants ever vigilant.
Asleep she seemed no human thing,
an angel, rather—heavenly.
Her finger wore her brother's ring
whose force you heard about before).

The aesthetic of beauty intended for Western women is here applied to Angelica, a Saracen woman – a Chinese woman – without modification. She is blonde and is compared to an angel, thereby perfectly embodying classical feminine Western beauty: the angelic woman stylized and praised

[68] Here I follow the variant proposed by Aldo Domenico Scaglione, "d'orto," instead of Angelandrea Zottoli's "d'oro," as it is a more convincing reading and more useful for my analysis. See Aldo Domenico Scaglione, ed. *Orlando Innamorato, Sonetti e Canzoni*, by Matteo Maria Boiardo (Turin: UTET, 1951); and Angelandrea Zottoli, ed., *Tutte le opere*, by Matteo Maria Boiardo (Milan: Mondadori, 1944).

by medieval courtly love poetry from the troubadours to Dante Alighieri and Francesco Petrarca. She is the woman with whom the act of falling in love entails the risk of losing one's mind or wits, as happens with Orlando, and the woman who can drive a man "fuor d'orto di ragione" (outside of the garden of reason), as Dante writes in *Doglia mi reca ne lo core ardire* (*Rime*: 106).[69] Here in the *Innamorato*, the archetype of the maddening beauty imports not only theological repercussions but also political ramifications, such as the loss of the Frankish realm.

The whitening of the Saracens, an apparent prerequisite for their acceptance, is insufficient for Angelica's assimilation. The erasure of her 'otherness' succeeds on the surface but remains incomplete. Despite her looks, Angelica behaves dishonorably, thereby subverting the original intent of assimilation in her portrayal. There still remains some trace of the East in her, a trace of orientalism that brands her as 'wrong.' She is seen as morally reproachable and her most effective weapon is deception,[70] effected by the magic ring that lets her disappear, but also by her words and behavior. Despite the assertions of some scholars,[71] Angelica is not just some passive object of male eroticism but is in fact a character who acquires a considerable amount of agency as the plot develops. Indeed, though she is chased throughout the poem by Christian and Saracen knights, she always manages to flee them thanks to her deceptive abilities, exemplified by her deception of – and escape from – Rinaldo in the first canto (*OF* 1.51-56).[72] She enacts a real fight for freedom and for agency which can also be seen, as suggested by Mario Santoro, as a "fuga" (flight, escape) from male hegemony, from her exclusive role as a "woman-object", from her pre-assigned role as

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[69] See Dante Alighieri, *Rime*, Gianfranco Contini and Maurizio Perugi (Turin: Einaudi, 2007).
[70] It is worth noting that deception was a typical accusation used against Western women considered morally reproachable, not just Eastern women. Deception was also one of the few ways across the world women could gain agency in a male world.
[71] See Cavallo, *World*, 24-32.
[72] Though outside the scope of this study, deception is given as a typical weapon for women in texts from this period, such as Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*, in which it is one of the most important vectors of women's agency.

an "object of desire,"[73] a role which reaches its peak expression in the episode where she is tied to a rock on Ebuda island as a votive offering and where she is saved, not incidentally, by Ruggiero.[74] Over the course of the poem, Angelica gradually emancipates herself, effecting a transition from the object of desire to a desiring subject,[75] and she finally reaches her freedom and full agency with her choice of companion, Medoro, a choice that entails important consequences discussed later in this chapter.[76]

Angelica's whiteness does not entirely erase her otherness but, instead, confines it exclusively to her moral and behavioral attitudes. Her whitewashed appearance, which can be mistaken for an attempt to assimilate or domesticate her, only reinforces her moral otherness. Angelica, the white Saracen princess, will never be conquered or assimilated. She will never convert and her choice of the Saracen knight Medoro as a mate will bring about extreme consequences, chief among them Orlando's madness. Angelica differs from the Saracen women who preceded her in the medieval *chansons de geste*, women who were either characterized by a marked aesthetic otherness that made them undesirable, such as the black pagan female warrior,[77] or who were described as white, beautiful and generally aligned with the Western stereotype of beauty, in which case they were always converted, conquered and made a tool of the political and religious Western colonizing agenda.[78] Angelica is neither conquered nor converted in the *Furioso*:

[73] Mario Santoro, *L'anello di Angelica: nuovi saggi ariosteschi* (Naples: Federico & Ardia, 1983), 63-66.
[74] Ruggiero's rescue of Angelica, which mirrors Orlando's rescue of Olimpia from a similar situation, will be discussed in the fourth chapter of this dissertation (95-96).
[75] The same transition is seen in the character of Doralice, daughter of the king of Granada and a potential double of Angelica, who chooses Mandricardo, king of the Tartars, over the man to whom she had been betrothed, King Rodomonte of Sarza and Algiers. Consider too the mirroring of the dynamic between Angelica and Orlando, to whom Rodomonte is recognized as a Saracen counterpart.
[76] See 41-43. Santoro instead identifies the turning point for Angelica in her recovery of the magic ring (19.18), the object which allows her to undertake her travel back home alone, freeing her from the need for the protection of a man; see Santoro, *Anello*, 68.
[77] See De Weever, *Sheba's Daughters*, 53-111.
[78] See Sharon Kinoshita, *Medieval Boundaries: Rethinking Difference in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 1-45.

she is not assimilated, despite her aesthetic resemblance to the stereotype of the Western woman. Beyond this, although in the episodes of the *Innamorato* in which she is kept safe in her castle in Albracà Angelica appears to embody the stereotype of the medieval Saracen princess, a stand-in for the realm of her father and, therefore, for the territory that needs to be conquered and delivered to Christian rule – at once, the object of erotic and colonial desire – in the *Furioso* she never represents a specific territory and conquering her does not entail the conquest of any realm until the end of her journey, when she decides to go back to Cathay with Medoro, the man she chose as a companion.

Angelica is not whitened in order to be assimilated, as with the medieval Saracen princess Bramimonde in the *Chanson de Roland* and with Marfisa and Ruggiero in the *Furioso*. Instead, she remains the enemy. Her whiteness works in contrast with her behavior within the racial norms of the poem. It highlights her otherness, which it presents as something hidden, something that can appear similar but is definitively not, something that can seem good but is definitively wrong. To that end, Angelica's profile is made to adhere perfectly to the portrait not of the classic Saracen princess (Bramimonde) but of a specific kind of Eastern woman from Western epics, whose antecedents are Circe and Dido: the beautiful and enchanting Easterner whom the heroes must reject to carry out their destiny. As David Quint points out, Angelica belongs to that series of "Oriental heroines – Medea, Dido, Armida, and Milton's Eve – whose seductions are potentially more perilous than Eastern arms."[79] According to manuals and tradition, the physical description (*effictio*) of a character should suggest the personality (*notatio*). Not so with Angelica, whose hybrid nature challenges the norm. She is instead a double container, possessing the aesthetic – the façade – of the Western 'good' and the behavior and practices of the Eastern 'bad.'

[79] David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 29.

Angelica represents an enemy who has shed any trace of aesthetical otherness, an enemy who is deceptive and hard to detect. She looks thus similar to the heresy spreading throughout Europe and consequently she is the agent of distraction who distances the Christian knights from their duties and ultimately from the defense of the faith. She represents an attack from the inside, an internal enemy, one who precisely recalls the attack on Italy by European powers and the internal attack on Christianity by the Protestant Reformation, problems very much on Ariosto's mind and exhibiting significant presence in his work.

Analyzing these two whitened Saracen characters in tandem can yield further conclusions regarding the depiction of the Saracens – the 'others' – in the *Furioso* and help better understand the ways in which this text treats the enemy invasion endemic to the subject matter. Angelica and Medoro, when seen together, also recall another famous couple from the Western literary tradition: Ghismonda and Guiscardo, the protagonists of the first novella of the fourth day of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*.[80] The novella – which recounts Ghismonda's transgression of norms and her father's will in choosing as a companion Guiscardo, a man with a noble soul but humble origins, instead of a man of her same social class – presents the same dilemma that Angelica faces when choosing her companion.

Instead of choosing a Christian or Saracen knight who would correspond to her level of aristocracy, Angelica in fact chooses Medoro, a simple foot-soldier "d'oscura stirpe" (*OF* 18.165: of humble origin). Ariosto clearly highlights the mismatch between Medoro and his would-be contenders:

> O conte Orlando, o re di Circassia,
> vostra inclita virtù, dite, che giova?
> Vostro alto onor dite che in prezzo sia,

[80] This novella will also be an important intertext for the plotline of Bradamante and Ruggiero, as will be discussed in the fifth chapter of this dissertation (130). However, Bradamante and Ruggiero's love story differs considerably from that of Angelica and Medoro in its setting, outcome and, especially, purpose.

o che mercè vostro servir ritruova.
Mostratemi una sola cortesia
che mai costei v'usasse, o vecchia o nuova,
per ricompensa o guidardone e merto
di quanto avete già per lei sofferto.

Oh se potessi ritornar mai vivo,
quanto ti parria duro, o re Agricane!
che già mostrò costei sì averti a schivo
con repulse crudeli et inumane.
O Ferraù, o mille altri ch'io non scrivo,
ch'avete fatto mille pruove vane
per questa ingrata, quanto aspro vi fôra,
s'a costui in braccio voi la vedesse ora!

(19.31-32: O Count Orlando, O Circassian,
Of what avail your prowess and your fame?
What price your honour, known to every man?
What good of all your long devotion came?
Show me one single favour, if you can,
What recompense, what kindness can you name,
What gratitude, what mercy has she shown
For sufferings for her sake undergone?

O Agricane, great and noble king,
If to our life on earth you were restored,
How you would suffer now, remembering
How cruelly your person she abhorred!
O Ferraù, o thousands I might sing,
Who vainly served that ingrate, and adored;
You would be stricken to the core, I vow,
To see her in those arms enfolded now!).

This sadistic recollection of Angelica's suitors is plainly ironic and invites an alternative reading of Angelica's choice. As discussed above, in fact, Medoro has a *cor gentile* (a gentle soul) and, if more evidence were necessary, Ariosto reveals that Medoro also writes much poetry (23.107: parole assai), such as the two stanzas Orlando finds by the entrance of the cave where the two lovers consummate their love (23.108-109). Angelica's violation of the aristocratic code is, therefore, based on the classic *topos* of the Western courtly love poetry, which states the supremacy

of a noble heart over a noble man.[81] Angelica's choice of Medoro thus mirrors Ghismonda's choice of Guiscardo against her father's will. And, like Ghismonda, Angelica chooses rationally,[82] as Ariosto writes, evaluating not just Medoro's "beltade" (19.26: beauty) but also his "costume" (19.26: behavior). Angelica chooses heart over station and, with this choice, her dangerous agency is reframed through a classic exemplum of the Western courtly love tradition.

Angelica's final rehabilitation is due to Ariosto's irony and his desire to never present a definitive judgement but to always show things from different points of view. But it is also the sign of a new possibility, that of a border that has become permeable and, therefore, crossable. In the height of the Renaissance, Ariosto portrays a Middle Ages where evil does not always coincide with the East and where Christianity does not necessarily coincide with chivalry. He describes a world unified by the common code of chivalric courtesy that now works as a signifier for both sides. He presents a world where 'good' is not only associated with one side and where the quest for 'good' is not a fight against an enemy as it had been in earlier romances but an individual struggle within each character, between instincts, such as the knights' love for Angelica or the fulfillment of their duties. Ariosto's medievalism portrays a world detached from reality, in which the aesthetic differences between west and east have disappeared, and courtesy and religion remain the only discriminants. But while religion, at least nominally, distinguishes characters as belonging to one recognizable alliance, apparently creating a clear border between the two cultures only crossed through conversion, courtesy reshuffles the deck. Courtesy becomes a cross-border, transcultural characteristic, not pertaining entirely and exclusively to either side.[83]

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[81] This differs from, while complementing, the violation of the racial code.
[82] On Angelica's rationality, see Santoro, *Anello*, 57-81.
[83] For an overview of transculturality, see Fernando Ortiz, *Miscelanea II of Studies Dedicated to Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969) / Miscelanea II de estudios dedicados a Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969)* (New York: InterAmericas, 1998); Dagmar Reichardt, "Creating Notions of Transculturality: The Work of Fernando Ortiz and his Impact on Europe," in Elke Sturm-Trigonakis, ed., *World Literature and the Postcolonial* (Berlin/Heidelberg: Metzler, 2020), 69-83; Enrico Mario Santi, *Fernando Ortiz: contrapunteo y transculturación* (Madrid: Colibrí, 2002); Wolfgang Welsch,

This erasure of skin color and, more generally, of the aesthetical similarity between Christians and Saracens conforms to a larger erasure of the difference between Christians and Saracens, already noted by Pio Rajna,[84] which involved not just their appearance but also – as will be discussed in the following chapter – their morality. This process of familiarizing the 'other' is embraced by Ariosto in the *Furioso*, but his predecessors had already been exponents since the end of the Middle Ages. As Antonio Franceschetti notes,[85] the process is already present in late medieval works like the *Aspramonte* of Andrea da Barberino – a rewriting of the *Chanson d'Aspremont*, a poem strictly related to the *Furioso* especially for the genesis of the character of Ruggiero[86] – or in early Renaissance works like the *Falconetto*[87] and the *Inamoramento di Carlo Magno*,[88] texts that still lack modern editions and can be only consulted in incunabula.

Franceschetti observes a certain ubiquity of good character in the *Aspramonte*:

> As for duels, fights, or wars on battlefields, there is little doubt that – generally speaking – for Andrea da Barberino, Christians are morally better than Saracens. During peace, however, in their elegant palaces or simple and humble dwellings, with their courteous and generous sense of hospitality, it is quite often clear that the Saracens have nothing to envy in their Christian counterparts. One feels at times that there is such a 'social' assimilation as to leave very little to 'religious' alternatives; it makes no difference if one believes in Christ or in Mohammed, the difference is determined only by the nature and the character of the individual, who can be good or bad, no matter in what or in whom he believes.[89]

"Transculturality – the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today," in Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash, ed., *Spaces of Cultures: City, Nation, World* (London: SAGE, 1999), 194-213; and Wolfgang Welsch, "Rolle und Veränderungen der Religion im gegenwärtigen Übergang zu transkulturellen Gesellschaften," in Dirk Siedler, ed., *Religionen in der Pluralität. Ihre Rolle in postmodernen Gesellschaften. Wolfgang Welschs Ansatz in christlicher und islamischer Perspektive* (Berlin: Alektor, 2003), 13-47.

[84] See Rajna, *Fonti*.

[85] See Antonio Franceschetti, "On the Saracens in Early Italian Chivalric Literature," in Hans-Erich Keller, ed., *Romance Epic: Essays on a Medieval Literary Genre* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1987), 203-211.

[86] See the first chapter of this dissertation (7).

[87] This episode can be read in the incunabulum printed in Milan in 1483 (103) or in "Canto IV" of the different version in octaves, printed in Venice in 1500 (Octave 28).

[88] This episode can be read in "Canto XXXVII" of the incunabulum printed in Venice in 1491.

[89] Franceschetti, "On the Saracens," 207.

He goes on to add that Saracens and Christians

> all seem to belong to an identical, idealized world; they wear the same kind of armor, use the same rituals, share the same ideals, enjoy hunting, dancing, parties in the same way and always live in similar, beautiful castles, palaces and gardens.[90]

Boiardo, Ariosto's immediate predecessor at the court of Ferrara, also undertook this process of familiarization of the Saracens in his *Innamorato*, perhaps to an even greater extent than Ariosto, as recently suggested by Cavallo.[91] Within the interpretation proposed here, however, my objective is not to compare Ariosto and Boiardo (or any of their predecessors) to determine who might have been more sympathetic toward the Saracens – or, recalling orientalism, who might have imposed more forcefully his Western beauty and moral standards as a critical parameter for 'Others' – but, instead, to highlight how Ariosto's specific and unique practice of whitening the Saracens and, more generally, his processes of familiarization work within the *Furioso.*

In the *Furioso*, the familiarization of the Saracens reveals a new form of orientalism, a point of view towards the East that is driven by the desire to impose Western standards of beauty and morality on the 'others,' and no longer by the desire to demonize them as excessively different. Ariosto's pattern here is a colonial desire of assimilation, rather than a defensive desire of exclusion: more precisely, it is a defensive colonialist desire of assimilation. It also allows the text to identify the enemy – the invader, in the case of the *Furioso* – as something similar and not 'other,' something recalling the attacks on Italian independence by European powers or those on Catholic Christianity by the Protestant heresy more than it suggests the Turks attacking Europe with their Muslim culture and religion.

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[90] Franceschetti, "On the Saracens," 209.
[91] Cavallo, *World*, 20.

In the *Orlando Furioso*, then, the Saracens are not aesthetically different, nor do they have different aesthetic standards. As will be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter, they are not too morally different either. The familiarization process that alters their aesthetic, in fact, also affects their morality and, consequently, their religion.

Chapter 3. The Saracen religion as an empty box: Gano of Maganza

The historical critique of the *Orlando furioso* has generally dismissed Ariosto's religiosity and the importance of religion within his text. Classic examples of such dismissiveness are the authoritative assessments of Francesco De Sanctis and Benedetto Croce, which respectively presented the *Furioso* as "a world without religion or morality" ("mondo dove non è alcuna serietà di vita interiore, non religione, non patria, non famiglia")[92] and Ariosto as an "irreligious and aphilosophical soul" ("spirito altrettanto areligioso quanto afilosofico").[93] These two severe judgements stifled interest in the topic in subsequent generations. But as Emilio Bigi noted in his introduction to the poem,[94] religion enjoys an important presence in the *Furioso*, more important than its presence in the *Orlando Innamorato* or any other of the continuations thereof published between 1494 – the year of the definitive interruption of the drafting of the *Innamorato* – and 1516, when the first edition of the *Furioso* was printed.[95] Ariosto, in fact, scatters religiously themed moments throughout the text: Charlemagne's prayer to God; the Archangel Michael's mission to bring Discord into the Saracen camp; the encounters of Angelica, Isabella and Ruggiero with hermits; the various conversions and marriages. Nearly the entirety of Astolfo's adventure to recover Orlando's wits is another such example, one that traverses much of the work and interlaces with many of the other stories. Ariosto, furthermore, appears to be much more interested in the contemporary theological debate than Boiardo and the other authors continuing his work. Indeed, Ariosto, mainly through Astolfo's adventure and frequently mediated by the filter of irony, does treat many of the theological questions then at the center of the cultural and religious debate, such

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[92] Francesco De Sanctis, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, ed. Nino Cortese (Naples: Morano, 1936), 2:48.
[93] Benedetto Croce, *Ariosto, Shakespeare e Corneille* (Bari: Laterza, 1929), 39.
[94] Emilio Bigi, "Introduzione," in Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso* (Milan: Rusconi, 1980), 7-70, 31.
[95] See, respectively, Nicolò degli Agostini, *Il quarto libro de linamoramento de Orlando* (Venice: Giorgio de' Rusconi, 1505); Nicolò degli Agostini, *Il quinto libro dello inamoramento de Orlando* (Venice: Giorgio de' Rusconi, 1514); and Raffaele Valcieco's *El quinto e fine de tutti li libri de lo inamoramento de Orlando* (Venice: Giorgio de' Rusconi, 1514).

as original sin (*OF* 34.60), the salvation of the soul through Grace or through actions and free will (33.117; 34.56) and the truthfulness of the Holy Scriptures (35.25-30).[96]

Important critics from the generations after De Sanctis and Croce have sporadically discussed the theme of ethical and religious faith in Ariosto and more recent studies, mostly by scholars outside the strict academic circle of *Furioso* specialists, have also investigated Ariosto's religiosity.[97] Few studies, though, have focused on the depiction and function of religion within the *Furioso* and its impact on the identity of the characters and their relationships. To do so, the present dissertation will devote special attention to the Saracen—Muslim—religion: the religion of the 'others,' the religion of the enemy and, in this case, of the invader. How are religion and the characters' religiosity depicted? How is the Saracen religion depicted? How does religion affect the identity of the characters, and the relationship between Christians and Saracens? And, especially, what conclusions does such an analysis yield?

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[96] Recent studies that present Ariosto's irony as a rhetoric and epistemological strategy include Giuseppe Sangirardi, "Trame e genealogie dell'ironia ariostesca," *Italian Studies* 69.2 (2014): 189-203; and Christian Rivoletti, *Ariosto e l'ironia della finzione. La ricezione letteraria e figurativa dell'* Orlando Furioso *in Francia, Germania e Italia* (Venice: Marsilio, 2014), 1-51.

[97] The very first critic of Ariosto's treatment of faith was his successor and rival, Torquato Tasso, as noted in Margaret Ferguson, *Trials of Desire: Renaissance Defensens of Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 62-70. In modern times, the topic has been debated in Robert Durling, *The Figure of the Poet in the Renaissance Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965); Giorgio De Blasi, "L'Ariosto e le passioni (studio sul motivo poetico fondamentale dell' 'Orlando Furioso')," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 129 (1952): 318-362; Edoardo Saccone, *Il soggetto del "Furioso" e altri saggi tra Quattrocento e Cinquecento* (Naples: Liguori, 1974), 161-200; Saccone, "Prospettive"; Peter DeSa Wiggins, *Figures in Ariosto's Tapestry: Character and Design in the* Orlando furioso (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Ascoli, *Ariosto's Bitter Harmony*, 62n39, 284n44-285n45 and 329-331; Neuro Bonifazi, *Le lettere infedeli* (Rome: Officina, 1975); Sergio Zatti, *Il "Furioso" tra epos e romanzo* (Lucca: Pacini Fazzi, 1990), 99-105 and *passim*; and, especially, Albert Russell Ascoli, "Faith as a Cover-Up: Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, Canto 21, and Machiavellian Ethics," *I Tatti Studies* 8 (1999), 135-170. Some studies suggest that Neoplatonic and Hermetic philosophy influenced Ariosto. See Franco Picchio, *Ariosto e Bacco. I codici del Sacro nell'* Orlando furioso (Turin: Paravia, 1999); and Franco Picchio, *Ariosto e Bacco due. Apocalisse e nuova religione nel* Furioso (Cosenza: Pellegrini, 2007). Other studies suggest Ariosto's sensitivity to providential ideas and to a Savonarolan spirituality. See Gigliola Fragnito, "Intorno alla 'religione' dell'Ariosto: i dubbi del Bembo e le credenze ereticali del fratello Galasso," *Lettere italiane* 34 (1992): 208-239; and Stefano Jossa. "*A difesa di sua santa fede*. Il poema Cristiano dell'Ariosto (*Orlando furioso*, XXXIV 54–67)," in Stefano Jossa and Giuliana Pieri, ed., *Chivalry, Academy, and Cultural Dialogues: The Italian Contribution to European Culture; Essays in Honour of Jane E. Everson* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2016), 32-42.

To start, it is, as usual, fruitful to look back at Pio Rajna's milestone study, *Le fonti dell'*Orlando furioso, in which, commenting on the new epic setting created by Boiardo and Ariosto, he writes:

> Al sentimento religioso, così vivo nella *Chanson de Roland*, e perpetuatosi, per forza di abitudine e di tradizione, fino agli ultimi rampolli del ciclo carolingio, si è sostituito il sentimento cavalleresco. […] Credere in Cristo o in Maometto, è poco meno che indifferente
>
> (The religious feeling, so alive in the *Chanson de Roland*, and perpetuated, by force of habit and tradition, until the last offspring of the Carolingian cycle, has been replaced by the feeling of chivalry. [...] To believe in Christ or Muhammad, is little short of indifferent).[98]

While this brief observation might first appear to align Rajna perfectly with his contemporaries De Sanctis and Croce, after careful consideration it can offer a slightly different point of view. Rajna is discussing the characters' religiosity, not Ariosto's, and he expresses his judgement through a comparison between the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Furioso*, creating a setting which enriches the meaning of his words and reframes his conclusion. Rajna's statement does not, in fact, mean that religion is unimportant or that being Christian or Saracen necessarily implies indifference but only that it is not equivalent to being 'right' or 'wrong,' a 'good character' or a 'bad character,' and, therefore, that the hard border traced by Roland in the *Chanson de Roland* – 'Pagans are wrong, Christians are right' – is no longer entirely true.

In a world traditionally divided in two opposite parts by the Mosaic distinction,[99] the border between Christians and Saracens appears to become blurred because following the 'true religion'

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[98] Rajna, *Fonti*, 30, my translation.

[99] The Mosaic distinction is a theory developed by the German Egyptologist Jan Assmann to describe the passage from classical polytheism to monotheism. This shift saw a pluralistic and shared perception of religion develop into a dichotomic and exclusivist dynamic, dividing the field in two: the followers of the true religion and those of the false. With a specific focus on the process of *inventio* and its manifestation in the *variatio* of Renaissance epics, Tobias Gregory has recently argued that the paradigm shift caused by the advent of monotheism – the distinction between true and false religion – is "the single most important difference between classical and Renaissance epic," the decisive

or the 'false religion' is no longer sufficient to define the moral identity of a character. Religion in the *Furioso*, despite remaining the dominant cultural characteristic that ostensibly identifies one side or the other – tracing a border between Christians and Saracens, between invaded and invaders – appears to have lost the ability, typical in medieval epics, to define the characters' morality. Within the fiction, the chivalric code is the 'new religion,' the moral compass by which a character and, particularly, a knight is judged.[100] Belonging to a different religion does not seem to present an insurmountable impediment to being framed as a positive character – as a character's disrespect of the chivalric code would be – and, therefore, does not necessarily entail a clear otherness, as long as a knight or other character generally respects the chivalric code. This new value system, which defines the characters and their interactions and which saw the chivalric code overthrow religion as an indicator of a character's morality, is immediately acknowledged and highlighted at the beginning of the work, in the first canto, with the famous clash between Rinaldo and Ferraù in a forest outside Paris.

Such a setting is itself indicative. Despite the many similarities between Saracens and Christians, Ariosto's world is still divided in two parts: on the map, Christians and Saracens are clearly separated. As depicted by global maps of the time, Christians are at the center of the known world, while Saracens – giants, blacks, cannibals and monstrous races – live on the margins. The

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factor which "forms the consistent axis of difference in Renaissance epic poetry, the line dividing heroes and adversaries, allies and others, us and them"; see Tobias Gregory, *From Many Gods to One: Divine Action in Renaissance Epic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 13-14. The present dissertation seeks to demonstrate that this line, which traditionally separated Christians from Saracens, experiences in the *Furioso* a process of weakening, blurring and becoming more permeable. For a deep insight into the theory of the "Mosaic distinction," see Jan Assmann, "The Mosaic Distinction: Israel, Egypt, and the Invention of Paganism," *Representations* 56 (1996): 48-67; Jan Assmann, *Of God and Gods: Egypt, Israel, and the Rise of Monotheism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008); Jan Assmann, *The Price of Monotheism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Jan Assmann, *From Akhenaten to Moses: Ancient Egypt and Religious Change* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2014); and Jan Assmann, *The Invention of Religion: Faith and Covenant in the Book of Exodus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

[100] Conversely, as Albert Russell Ascoli has argued, Ariosto saw inconsistencies and contradictions in this value system – based on the absolute faith in the given word – when considered outside the fiction, in Ariosto's contemporary times and especially in its politics. See Ascoli, "Faith."

realms of Angelica, Agramante and Marsilio are all located on the margins, as are the isle of the homicidal women and the magic realms of Alcina and Falerina. France is at the center, while everything magical and irrational generally occurs outside of it. The one exception[101], the one place inside France not completely ruled by the rationality of Western control that can thus allow the encounter – and partnership, in this specific case – between East and West, between Christians and Saracens: is the forest. The forests within France are places very different from the rest of France, as places of disorder where it is possible to meet magic and monstrous creatures. They are places that possess the loose rationality characteristic of Pagania, everything outside Christianity, and, therefore, places where the border between West and East is blurry and where a peaceful encounter with the 'other' and even a temporary border-crossing are possible.[102]

After a brief presentation of the main characters – Agramante, Carlo, Orlando, Ruggiero, Angelica, Marsilio – and a brief flashback summary of the end of Boiardo's *Innamorato*, narrating the defeat of the Frankish army at the Pyrenees against African and Spanish troops led by the kings Agramante and Marsilio (1.1-9), Ariosto begins the 'new story' about Angelica who, fleeing the Christian field in the middle of the battle, enters a forest on horseback. In the forest, Angelica runs into Rinaldo, Orlando's cousin and one of the Christian knights in love with her who has chased

[101] Apparently, there would be another exception: Atlante's castle of illusions; but its existence is due to magic, and it is in fact located into a wood. For an extensive treatment of Atlante's castle in *Orlando Furioso*, see: Sergio Zatti, "La trappola romanzesca di Atlante: lettura del canto XII dell'*Orlando furioso*," *Chroniques italiennes*, web series 19 (2011): 1-14, chroniquesitaliennes.univ-paris3.fr/PDF/web19/Zattiweb19.pdf.

[102] For an overview on the depiction and the narrative function of forests in medieval and Renaissance literature, see Albrecht Classen, *The Forest in Medieval German Literature: Ecocritical Readings from a Historical Perspective* (Lanham: Lexington, 2015); Frans De Bruyn, "The Classical Silva and the Generic Development of Scientific Writing in Seventeenth-Century England," *New Literary History* 32.2 (2001): 347-373; Eugenio Donato, "'Per Selve e Boscherecci Labirinti': Desire and Narrative Structure in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*," in Patricia Parker and David Quint, ed., *Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 33-62; Elze Kegel-Brinkgreve, *The Echoing Woods: Bucolic and Pastoral from Theocritus to Wordsworth* (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1990); Olli Makkonen, "Forst-sanan alkuperä / Summary: The Origin of the Word Forst (Forest)," *Silva fennica* 8.1 (1974): 10-19; Joseph Meeker, *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology* (New York: Scribner, 1974); Corinne Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus, Broceliande, Arden* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1993); Troy Tower "Naming Trees in the *Gerusalemme liberata*." *Romance Studies* 31.3-4 (2013: 139-151); and Troy Tower "*Natura narrans*: Landscape as Literature in Early Modern Europe," (dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 2017).

her around the world. Now fleeing Rinaldo, Angelica chances upon Ferraù, a Saracen knight and Marsilio's nephew who, "perché era cortese, e n'avea forse / non men dei due cugini il petto caldo" (1.16: He was a gallant cavalier, in whom / Love burned no less than in the cousins' breast), offers Angelica his assistance and begins fighting Rinaldo. While the two knights clash, Angelica takes the opportunity to flee, at which point an unexpected and extraordinary thing happens: the two knights stop fighting to partner in the search for Angelica.

Despite being a Saracen, Ferraù is "cortese" (courtly) and, therefore, speaks the same 'language' as Rinaldo, which is why they can communicate and trust one another's word, so much so that they can even share the same horse. Ariosto highlights the exceptionality of the event:

> Oh, gran bontà de' cavallieri antiqui!
> Eran rivali, eran di fé diversi,
> e si sentian degli aspri colpi iniqui
> per tutta la persona anco dolersi;
> e pur per selve oscure e calli obliqui
> insieme van senza sospetto aversi
>
> (1.22: O noble chivalry of knights of yore!
> Here were two rivals, of opposed belief,
> Who from the blows exchanged were bruised and sore,
> Aching from head to foot without relief,
> Yet to each other no resentment bore.
> Through the dark wood and winding paths, as if
> Two friends, they go).

At the very beginning of the work, this passage sets the standard for the relational dynamic between Christians and Saracens within the fiction, an internal rule of the game. Rinaldo and Ferraù decide to collaborate, for the primary reason that they have a common goal (they are chasing Angelica, their personal desire and profit) that makes them neglect their duties (fighting for their God and their Lord), ultimately what makes them enemies; but it is still surprising that they decide to collaborate instead of fighting against each other for the one horse and, consequently, the right to follow Angelica. Surprising still is that they trust each other: "insieme van senza sospetto aversi."

They trust each other: by being tied by a pact and, having common values (the chivalric code), each knows the other will give the same importance to their pact.[103]

It is worth noting that Ferraù had already been the protagonist of an earlier important encounter with a Christian knight, in an episode narrated in the medieval *Historia Caroli Magni et Rotholandi*, a twelfth-century Latin forgery falsely attributed to Turpin, Charlemagne's contemporary Archbishop of Reims. There, Ferraù (Ferracutus) undertakes a theological debate with Orlando (Roland), revealing himself to be a character inherently suited to communicate with the 'other' and, furthermore, still very connected to a religion that serves as a fundamental marker of identity, while in the *Furioso* the religious difference between Rinaldo and Ferraù is barely mentioned in the narrator's amazed extradiegetic digression. In the *Furioso*, moreover, Ferraù undergoes the same familiarization process described in the previous chapter with respect to Angelica and Medoro. His Eastern aesthetic aspect, highlighted by Boiardo in the *Innamorato* – "Tutto ricciuto e ner come un carbone" (1.2.10: All curly and black as a coal) – is instead overlooked in the *Furioso*: during the Saracen invasion of Paris, Ariosto even calls him onto the battlefield with a parallel to Achilles, attributing his ferocity in battle with his desire to avenge the death of a beloved friend (16.71-73).[104]

Despite the classic division between Christians and Saracens, the *Furioso* presents an ambiguous space within which differences sometimes dwindle until they disappear, leaving no difference between a Saracen and a Christian knight. It portrays a world where the discriminating factor is not the geographical origins or the religious affiliation itself (East or West, Islam or

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[103] Keeping in mind the irony that pervades this passage, readers might even note a Dantean reference ("per selve oscure e calli obliqui"), which could imply that the two knights – if respectful of the chivalric code but despite being "rivali" and "di fe' diverse" – may even be able to cross Hell together or, at least, a world appalled by a war that looks very much like it.

[104] For a deeper analysis of the aesthetic familiarization of the Saracens in the *Furioso* see the second chapter of this dissertation. For more information on the literary *topos* associating the Muslim invader of Christianity with heroes of antiquity, see 56n110.

Christianity) but only the individual moral qualities, which lead and affect the whole identity and sociability of every character. Borrowing a term from film criticism, we could say that religion in the *Furioso* appears to function like a MacGuffin,[105] a plot device characteristic of thriller movies. The MacGuffin can be an object, place, person or a more abstract concept like Victory, Glory, Power, Love or – in this case – religion that attracts the characters, especially early in the story, and apparently drives their actions but which is insignificant and irrelevant in itself, usually losing importance and disappearing as the plot develops, revealed itself to be an empty set, a false goal. The MacGuffin is thus a virtual engine created as a pretext for the plot, important for the effect it has on the characters but not for what it is, what it means or what it entails: it is ultimately an empty box. Religion in the *Furioso* appears to be just such an empty box and religious affiliation just an accident of narrative opportunity or a matter of convenience: a choice – the etymology of the word 'heresy,' from the Greek *αἵρεσις* ('choice,' 'option,' 'party,' 'sect') – that has been emptied of any moral content and implication. The border-crossing effected by the Saracens (the invaders) converting consequently becomes a much easier process.

A similar ease, in a certain sense, is envisaged by Pope Pius II, Enea Silvio Piccolomini, one of the most famous humanists of the previous generation, in a letter to the seventh Ottoman Sultan, Mehmed II, who had just conquered Constantinople in 1453 and, in so doing, had delivered an end to the Byzantine Empire.[106] In 1461, Pope Pius II – inspired by the recent works of two cardinals, the *Cribratio Alkorani* (1460–61) by Nicholas of Cusa, and *Contra principales errores*

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[105] *MacGuffin* is a term coined by the English screenwriter Angus MacPhail and popularized by the English director Alfred Hitchcock, who used this plot device in many of his thriller movies. Hitchcock explained the term in a famous interview by François Truffaut. See François Truffaut, ed., *Le cinéma selon Alfred Hitchcock* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1966): "The story tells about two Scottish men on a train: one man says, 'What's that package up there in the baggage rack?' And the other answers, 'Oh, that's a MacGuffin'. The first one asks, 'What's a MacGuffin?' 'Well,' the other man says, 'it's an apparatus for trapping lions in the Scottish Highlands.' The first man says, 'But there are no lions in the Scottish Highlands,' and the other one answers, 'Well then, that's no MacGuffin!'"

[106] As discussed in the first chapter, Piccolomini is the same pope who tried to organize a crusade against Mohammed II.

perfidi Machometi et turcorum sive saracenorum (1459) by Juan de Torquemada, parts of which Pius even copied[107] – wrote the *Epistola Pii II ad Mahumetum Turcorum principem* (*Epistle to Mehmed*) trying to convert the Sultan, apparently offering him an easy choice to have it all.[108] The humanist pope, while highlighting the similarities between the two religions and aiming to resolve the few differences in favor of Christianity, writes:

> Quocirca, ut eo tandem veniamus quo nostra festinat oratio et id dicamus quod ad scribendum compulit tamque gloriam et tua salute tibi denique ostendamus, adhibe his paucis animum. Si vis inter Christianos tuum imperium propagare et nomen tuum quam gloriosum efficere, non auro, non armis, non exercitibus, non classibus opus est. Parva res omnium qui hodie vivunt maximum et potentissimum et clarissimum te reddere potest. Quaeris quae sit? Non est inventu difficilis, neque procul quaerenda, ubique gentium reperitur: id est aquae pauxillum, quo baptizeris et ad Christianorum sacra te conferas et credas Evangelio. Haec si feceris, non erit in orbe princeps qui te gloria supersit aut aequare potentia valeat. Nos te Graecorum et Orientis imperatorem appellabimus et quod modo vi occupas et cum iniuria tenes possidebis iure
>
> (Therefore, to come finally to the point of our letter, to tell you what has driven us to write to you, and to reveal how you may secure glory and salvation, attend carefully to the few things which follow here. If you want to extend your power over Christians and render your name as glorious as possible, you do not need gold, weapons, armies, or fleets. A little thing can make you the greatest, most powerful and illustrious man of all who live today. You ask what it is? It is not difficult to guess, not far to seek, and is everywhere to be found: it is a little bit of water by which you may be baptized and brought to Christian rites and to belief in the Gospel. If you receive this, there will not be any leader in the world who can surpass you in glory or equal you in power. We will call you ruler over the

[107] See Franco Gaeta, "Sulla 'Lettera a Maometto' di Pio II," *Bollettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo* 77 (1965): 127-228, 167-173.

[108] For a discussion of the letter, see Luca D'Ascia, *Il Corano e la Tiara* (Bologna: Pendragon, 2001); Gaeta, "Sulla Lettera"; and Franco Gaeta, "Alcune osservazioni sulla prima redazione della 'lettera a Maometto,'" in Cosimo Damiano Fonseca, ed., *Otranto 1480. Atti del convegno internazionale di studio promosso in occasione del V centenario della caduta di Otranto ad opera dei Turchi (Otranto, 19-23 maggio 1980)* (Lecce: Congedo, 1986), 1:177-186. Still relatively unknown is the case of the forged letters of Sultan Mehmed II, discussed in James Coleman, "Forging Relations between East and West: The Invented Letters of Sultan Mehmed II," in Walter Stephens, Earle Havens, and Janet Gomez, ed., *Literary Forgery in Early Modern Europe, 1450-1800* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 118-134.

> Greeks and the East; what you now hold by force and injustice, you will rightfully possess).[109]

As Franco Gaeta highlights in his analysis of the *Epistole*, "the fierce head of Islam who had killed Homer for the second time, all of a sudden becomes a man *cuius naturam bonam esse confidimus*, having *animi magnitudo*, *sapiens*, *princeps nobilis*," if he just accedes to convert to Christianity, thereby becoming a second Constantine.[110]

Perhaps one of the highest examples of Renaissance rhetoric, Pius's letter was composed – and should be read – through a diplomatic lens, meaning that what is written is not always what it seems, but we cannot ignore the seemingly paradoxical offer the pope makes to Mehmed nor its presentation.[111] After the fall of Constantinople, the Pope had attempted an offensive move, with his unsuccessful attempt to organize a crusade against Mehmed at the 1458 Conference of Mantua,[112] but now, in a different political setting and with the Ottoman Empire definitively established in the territories that had been the Eastern Roman Empire, Pius changes strategy, trying a defensive move to save Christianity from invasion. This defensive strategic move looks like a

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[109] The Latin text of Piccolomini's letter follows the modern edition published by Giuseppe Toffanin: see Pius, *Lettera*, 113-114. English translations follow Albert Baca's edition: see Pius, *Epistola*, 17-18.

[110] Gaeta, "Sulla Lettera," 131-132. As Mustafa Soykut explained, the *heroification* of the Muslim enemy invading Christianity (here, the Turks), articulated through an identification with heroes of antiquity, was not uncommon at that time; see Soykut, *Image*. The trope is also demonstrated in Cardinal Basilius Bessarion's *Orations to the Princes of Italy*, written in 1470 just ten years after Pius's letter in an unsuccessful attempt to mobilize the Italian rulers against the Ottoman Empire. Although he had dedicated his life to the organization of a new crusade to save Greek cultural treasures from Turkish hands, Bessarion, an important Greek humanist and nominally the Patriarch of Constantinople, his letter uses to addresses Mehmed II in eulogistic terms, reaching the point of comparing him to Alexander the Great (see also p. 11-12). See Gaetano Platania, "L'Europa orientale e l'unione delle chiese," in Gianfranco Fiaccadori, ed., *Bessarione e l'umanesimo* (Naples: Vivarium, 1994), 249-260.

[111] Some scholars have argued that the letter, which was never sent to the sultan but which widely circulated in Europe, was in fact never meant to be read by Mehmed II but was addressed to Christian princes reluctant to undertake a new crusade. See Nancy Bisaha, "'New Barbarian' or Worthy Adversary? Humanist Constructs of the Ottoman Turks in Fifteenth-Century Italy," in Davis Blanks and Michael Frassetto, ed., *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999), 185-205; Franco Cardini, "La Repubblica di Firenze e la crociata di Pio II," *Rivista storica della Chiesa in Italia* 33:2 (1979): 455-482, 471; Robert Schwoebel, *Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk (1453–1517)* (Nieuwkoop/New York: de Graaf/St. Martin's Press, 1967), 66; and Robert Schwoebel, "Coexistence, Conversion, and the Crusade Against the Turks," *Studies in the Renaissance* 12 (1965): 164-187, 179-180.

[112] See the first chapter of this dissertation: 13n21.

contract, much more like a marriage contract (with asset-sharing) than a conversion and was a widely popular political strategy at that time, especially among the small and precarious Italian states, which crossed lineage with their enemies, the big European powers – Spain, France and German states – to secure their own survival.[113] By subordinating religious faith to political strategy, the Pope's words appear to anticipate some of Machiavelli's pages from the *Prince* and the *Discourses*.[114]

Religion is used as a good to exchange and conversion is treated as a contract, entailing in this specific case the Sultan's submission to the Pope. The choice of religious affiliation is thus reduced to the realm of political strategy and, by consequence, the border-crossing constituted by the conversion seems to entail no material or moral change for the new believer. There is simply no 'otherness' to be erased. In the *Furioso*, the generalized loss of the moral and identity value of religious affiliation specifically affects the Saracen religion, a distinction that has been heretofore ignored by most critics of the poem, likely for its lack of any real description of the content and structure of the Saracens' religion and, moreover, for the scarcity of episodes portraying the Saracen characters even practicing their religion.

The Saracen religion

As noted above, religious affiliation in the *Furioso*, while no longer a reliable indicator of a character's identity, nonetheless appears to be the last discriminant between Saracens and

[113] Among many politically motivated unions, it is important to mention the 1528 marriage between the future Duke of Ferrara Ercole II d'Este and Renée of Valois-Orléans (the youngest child of King of France Louis XII and Anne of Brittany), known in Ferrara as Renée of France. This marriage and the figure of Renée are particularly revealing for the present research as they specifically concern Ferrara during Ariosto's time and, moreover, because Renée was a follower and a supporter of the Protestant Reformation: Renée was a political and religious enemy who passed through a process – or, at least, an attempted process – of assimilation into the d'Este court. The marriage and the presence of Renée in Ferrara will be discussed more thoroughly in the fifth chapter (105-107).

[114] See especially chapters 11 and 12 from the first book of the *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio* in Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discorsi sopra la prima Deca di Tito Livio: seguiti dalle Considerazioni intorno ai Discorsi del Machiavelli di Francesco Guicciardini* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000).

Christians, and, in the end, will be the instrument that completes the assimilation of the Saracen, of the 'other'. But, upon closer examination, defining characteristics internal to the Saracen religion are difficult to find. The lack of a clear identity is evident even in the terms used in the *Furioso* to describe Islam, something or someone related to Islam and, more in general, everything not affiliated to Christianity (that is, what we have been calling 'Saracen'). The most frequent term is "saracino/a/i/e" (saracen), which occurs 152 times as either a noun or an adjective, followed by "pagano/a/i/e" (pagan) with 137 uses.[115] The term "moro/a/i/e" (moor) is used only fifty-four times[116] and "infedele/i" (infidel) only six,[117] yet there is no trace in the text of the words 'Islam', 'Muslim' or 'Mohammedan' (or its older spelling 'Mahometan'), either as a noun or an adjective. There are other terms used in the poem to identify someone or something not pertaining to Christianity – like Tartar, Turk and Arab – but they have a definitive geographical connotation and are used to describe a specific geographic origin, not the religious affiliation.

To make associations between Islam and the characters or elements of the poem, Ariosto never uses terms etymologically related to Islam, Muslims or Mohamed.[118] He prefers the geographic term "Saracen," along with "Moor".[119] He also employs the terms "Pagan" and "Infidel", which do have a religious connotation but only generically, meaning 'non-Christian', belonging outside of Christianity, more than making reference to any specific religion – terms

[115] In three occasions, the term appears as *Pagania* and once as *Paganesimo*.
[116] See 29n59.
[117] One of these six usages appears as "Infideli."
[118] The term "Islam" derives from the Arabic *Islãm*, meaning 'total submission' or 'total abandonment,' the term "Muslim" from the Arabic-Persian *muslimãn*, plural of *muslim*, means 'participant of Islam' and 'Mohammedan' indicated a follower of Muhammad.
[119] The term "Saracino" (*Zarakenos* in Greek, *Saracenus* in Latin) is commonly considered to derive from the Arab word *Sciarkiin* (genitive of *Sciarkiun*), meaning 'westerner,' 'one from where the sun rises.' The term "Moro" comes from the Greek world *Mayros* (*Maurus*, in Latin), meaning 'dark,' and was first used exclusively to indicate dark-skinned people from the north of Africa (thus called *Mauritania*), and later also the Arabs who invaded Spain exactly coming from this region. The term "Moor", which should describe an aesthetical feature and not a religious affiliation, in this text, where, as we have seen, blackness is almost absent, is used to identify something or someone not Christian.

more similar to ‘unbaptized’ or heretic, than properly Muslim or Islamic. The term “Infedele” speaks for itself, the negation of the Latin word *fidelis* (faithful) and therefore means only unfaithful – that is, not faithful to Christianity – but does not positively point to any other faith. The term “Pagano” – from the Latin word *Pagànus* (the inhabitant of a *pagus*, a village) – during Roman time was used to define the inhabitants of small villages, as distinct from urban residents. After the advent of Christianity, these villagers typically showed the most resistance to the new religion and the word began to be applied by the Christian empire to idolaters, those who still followed the rites and beliefs of pre-Christian polytheistic religions and therefore lacked Christianization. The two terms *pagano* and *infidel* both describe the Islamic religion as a lack of Christianity – a void to be filled, an empty box – an association that Ariosto exploits in his poem. From its very inception, then, the Saracen religion in the *Furioso* does not even have a specific name of its own or, at least, a name which refers to a specific religious identity. Similar lacks are found as the poem transcends lexical choices and constructs the religion itself.

Although accurate information on Islam was certainly available in Ariosto’s time – and was very likely available to him personally – and although representations of Islam were present in other contemporaneous chivalric works such as the *Guerin Meschino* – written by Andrea da Barberino around 1410 but only published in 1473 – the *Furioso* presents almost no specific features internal to Islamic dogma and, when it does, it deliberately presents them incorrectly. Such is the case with the so called ‘Saracen Trinity’ of Apollino (Apollo), Macone (Mohammad) and Trevigante (Termagant). By flirting with the idea of Islam as a perversion of Christianity – Christianity turned upside-down – the poem presents a Saracen Trinity clearly modelled after the Christian trinity, despite widespread awareness in Christian Europe that Islam is a monotheistic

religion that denies the Holy Trinity.[120] It is a classic colonial move: imposing or, more accurately, superimposing, a feature of the reference religion on the religion of the 'others' to empty it of its own content and, at the same time, domesticate it and transform it into something familiar.

In addition to the identity of the Saracen religion, the religiosity of the Saracens themselves also appears to be weakened. Saracens in the *Furioso* appear not as a religious people but rather a people without religion. While the Christians in the poem often pray or invoke God for assistance in their tasks, the Saracens generally do not ask for help and, when they do occasionally perform religious acts, such activities are usually modelled after Christianity – as when Agramante and Ruggiero identically repeat the rite performed by Carlo and Rinaldo before the duel between Rinaldo and Ruggiero, substituting the Quran for the Bible for their oath (38.81–87) – or modelled after classical Greek and Roman religion, as with the Saracen knight Dardinello's plea to Mohammad for help in exchange for an offering of his enemy's weapons (18.56–58) or with Medoro's prayer to the moon (18.184), seen in the second chapter. To close the circle, the Saracens' God is consequently portrayed as an absent presence, deaf to the Saracens' prayers: "Macon che nulla sente" (40.16: Macon who hears nothing). The Christian God, meanwhile, is portrayed as an active presence helping Christians, famously exemplified in Astolfo's journey to the moon, guided every step of the way by God in order to recover Orlando's wits[121].

[120] See John Victor Tolan, ed., *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam: A Book of Essays* (New York: Garland, 1996). Accurate information is also present in contemporaneous works, like Aeneas Silvio Piccolomini's *De Asia*, written in 1461, shortly after the fall of Constantinople, but would only be printed in 1544, joined with *De Europa* (1458), under the title *La Discritione de l'Asia et Europa di Papa Pio II*; see Pius, *La Discritione de l'Asia et Europa di Papa Pio II* (Venice: Vincenzo Valgrisi, 1544). For an Italian translation of the work, see Pius, *Asia (De Asia, 1461)*, trans. Manlio Sodi and Remigio Presenti (Rome: IF Press, 2016).
[121] Other examples are the Christian God increasing Ruggiero's strength after the knight, while drowning, promises to convert to Christianity (41, 47-50); He informing and instructing the hermit about Ruggiero's arrival (41, 54); and He informing and instructing the hermit on the arrival of Orlando, Oliviero and Sobrino, and giving him the power to cure them (43, 190-194).

Islam, then, always seems to lack specificity, depicted without a specific name or dogma. It is portrayed as an empty box, different from Christianity but still not filled with any distinct value. It appears to be merely the absence of Christianity. Having literalized the Augustinian concept of evil as lack of good, the poem makes it appear as if only Christianity exists and everything else falls unworthy of the rank of 'religion.' Christianity is the only religion, and the evil of Islam is just a lack of Christianity.[122] This portrayal of Islam is thus a self-representation, a self-referential way of portraying the 'other' that is a colonial move both imposing the standards of one producer of culture and, at the same time, familiarizing the 'other' as different but similar, as it is defined in relation to the same values. More importantly, Ariosto's erasure of the values internal to the Saracen religion, an erasure that provides no real choice between two different options but only the choice of staying inside or outside Christianity, yields a portrayal of Islam that closely approaches heresy – a religious problem much more urgent to Ariosto's day-to-day life in sixteenth-century Ferrara – and thus facilitates the last step in the border-crossing process of assimilating the Saracens: conversion.

The view of Islam as itself heretical to Christianity and Muslims as half-Christians was in common circulation in Ariosto's time.[123] In his 1530 *Consultatio de bello Turcis inferendo*, written just four years before the collapse of Hungary after the disastrous defeat of King Louis II at Mohács, Erasmus of Rotterdam, one of the most important Christian theologians and humanists of Ariosto's day, reports a similar tendency:

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[122] On this topic, see Assmann's theory on the 'Mosaic distinction' discussed above (49n99).

[123] On Islam as a Christian heresy, see the manuscript Giovanni Battista Gigli composed in Rome in 1613 entitled "Il Maomettano […]. Alla Santità dil Sig. Papa Paolo Quinto Romano. Origine della Turchia et Costantinopoli, ordini et leggi Mahomettani", MS Barb. Lat. 4781 at the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana; and the Pisan manuscript mentioned in Kenneth Meyer Setton, *Western Hostility to Islam and Prophecies of Turkish Doom* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1992), 2-3. See also Alessandro D'Ancona, *La leggenda di Maometto in Occidente* (Rome: Salerno, 1994); Austin Evans and Walter Wakefield, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); and Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).

> Quum imperita multitudo Turcarum nomen audit, protinus concipit animo graues iras, et ad caedem inflammatur, canes et christiani nominis hostes illos vociferans; non reputans illos primum esse homines, deinde semichristianos
>
> (When the ignorant masses hear the Turks mentioned, they immediately become incensed and bloodthirsty, labeling them as dogs and the enemies of the Christian name. They forget that [the Turks] are human beings, and secondly that they are half-Christian).[124]

As Mustafa Soykut explains,[125] such statements generally stemmed from two sources: the widespread erroneous assumption that Islam was a heresy or a sect of Christianity; and the Quranic verses from the surah Family of Imran that recognize Jesus as a rightful prophet but not the son of God and that appeared to confirm the derivative and inauthentic character of Islam for the Christian theologians who held that assumption.

In the *Furioso*, the path that Ariosto draws towards conversion – the domestication process that he designs as a means to assimilate Muslim characters – is facilitated by the erasure of the aesthetic and religious differences of the 'other'. The Saracens are reduced to simple unbaptized infidels – an empty box, easily filled – and their assimilation is reduced to the simple choice of staying inside or outside Christianity, the same choice faced by heretics. John Van Engen's study on the ordering function of faith in medieval Christendom highlights a clear distinction – especially evident in the Renaissance (when Ariosto writes) but also found in the Middle Ages (when Ariosto's fiction takes place) – between the "infused faith" (*fides infusa*) of the christened child, transmitted through baptism at an early age, and the "acquired faith" (*fides acquisita*) of the mature

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[124] For the complete Latin text of the *Consultatio*, see Erasmus of Rotterdam, "Utilissima consultatio de bello Turcis inferendo," ed. A. G. Weiler, in *Opera omnia* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1986), 5.3:32-82, in particular 52-56, 68-71, 81-82; here, 52. See also Norman Housley, ed. and trans., *Documents on the Later Crusades, 1274-1580* (London: MacMillan, 1996), 178-183. For the English translation, see Housley, *Documents*, 178-179.
[125] Soykut, *Image*, 41.

believer, acquired through knowledge.[126] An even clearer distinction separated "implicit faith" – the idea to "believe whatever the church believes"[127] that was regarded as increasingly insufficient for a proper Christian, especially after the introduction of vernacular preaching – and "explicit faith" – the understanding and articulation of the faith, required only partially from laypeople, according to their sociocultural possibilities, but fully by the clergy.[128] Interestingly, only the Anabaptists would discuss the distinction between infusion and acquisition, while the distinction between explicit and implicit faith was a crucial issue debated by many reforming movements spreading around Europe.

The *Furioso* forces the borders of these categories: if respectful of the chivalric code, the Saracen knights in the poem need only to be baptized to be able to cross the border between the two cultures. They need no particular knowledge of the Christian religion nor, more importantly, need they pass through any moral change. Such is the case, for example, with the conversion of Sobrino (43.193–194). King of the northern African region of Garbo and the wise old counselor of the Saracen general Agramante, Sobrino is the only Saracen knight to survive the fight in Lampedusa (*Lipadusa* in the text), where three Saracen knights (Sobrino, Agramante and Gradasso) and three Christian knights (Orlando, Oliviero and Brandimarte) fight the decisive battle of the war.[129] As the wisest of the Saracens – "né più di lui prudente Saracino" (14.24: there was

[126] See John Van Engen, "Faith as a Concept of Order in Medieval Christendom," in Thomas Kselman, ed., *Belief in History* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 19-67.
[127] John Van Engen explains that "the point was to be at one, in intention and confession, with the church conceived as the body of the faithful and led by those 'superiors' charged with possessing an explicit knowledge of the faith"; see Van Engen, "Faith," 41. An early and clear statement of this perspective by the theologian William of Auxerre (1140/50–1231): "Est ergo sensus, quod prelati debent instruere simplices et simplices debent inniti fidei ipsorum, quia sufficit simplicibus si credunt aliquos articulos fidei explicite et alios implicite. Sed prelati tenentur credere omnes explicite. […] Credere autem implicite est credere in hoc universali: quicquid credit ecclesia, credere esse verum." See William of Auxerre, *Summa aurea* (Paris/Grottaferrata: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique/Collegio San Bonaventura, 1986), 212 (§3.12.5); compare notes 120, 123, 124, 126and 131 here.
[128] Van Engen, "Faith," 31-49.
[129] On the minor character of Sobrino, his wisdom and his conversion, see Marco Dorigatti, "Sobrino ariostesco e misconosciuto," *Belfagor* 65.4 (2010): 401-414.

not a Saracen wise as him) – and given his respect for the chivalric code, Sobrino is given first aid after the battle by Orlando, who orders his cure and comforts him as if he were a relative, as the text specifically states: "e confortollo con parlar benigno, / come stato gli fosse parente" (42.19: And spoke some words of kind encouragement, / As if two relatives, not foes, they were).

As a prisoner of the victorious surviving Christian knights, Orlando and Oliviero, he will first be brought with them to Sicily, where Orlando has a tomb built for Brandimarte, and then to a small island where Oliviero can be cured by a saintly hermit. Having witnessed the hermit's miraculous healing power and longing to experience the miracle himself, Sobrino abruptly decides to convert to Christianity. He is immediately baptized by the hermit and just as immediately accepted as an equal by the Christian knights who had just fought against him and taken him prisoner. It is worth recalling that, at that time, prisoners of the wars between Christians and Saracens were usually enslaved, and remained so if they decided to convert, though they were then typically offered better living conditions.[130] Sobrino, however, is no common prisoner: he is a king and his conversion is a colonial action with political repercussions that entail the conversion of his entire kingdom, which is brought within the borders of Christianity. An important exception is Ruggiero's conversion (41.55-60) but, as will be discussed in the following chapter, he is a character with a special destiny and therefore requires a proper catechism to be converted and proper training to be assimilated.

[130] On the practice of not freeing slaves of war even after their conversion, see Serena Di Nepi, "I 'Turchi", la Guerra e le conversioni," in Fulvio Ferrario, Eduardo López-Tello García and Emanuela Prinzivalli, ed., *Riforma/riforme: continuità o discontinuità? Sacramenti, pratiche spirituali e liturgia fra il 1450 e il 1600* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2019); Henri Bresc, ed., *Figures de l'esclavage au Moyen Age et dans le monde moderne* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996); Youval Rotman, *Les esclaves et l'esclavage: de la Méditerranée antique à la Méditerranée médiévale; VIe-XIe siècles* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 2004); Giovanna Fiume, *Schiavitù mediterranee. Corsari, rinnegati e santi di età moderna* (Milan: Mondadori, 2009); and Joseline Dakhlia and Bernard Vincent, ed., *Une intégration invisible*, vol. 1 of *Les musulmans dans l'histoire de l'Europe* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2011), within which see especially Giovanni Ricci, "Les derniers esclaves domestiques. Entre Ferrare, Venise et Mantoue (XV-XVI siècle)," 443-456; and Guillaume Calafat and Cesare Santus, "Les avatars du «Turc». Esclaves et commerçant musulmans au Livourne (1600–1750)," 471-522.

The primary objective of the Roman Curia in a time of such great internal upheaval, secessions and dangerous attacks from outside enemies, was to plug the leaks, tighten the ranks of its army by strengthening the primacy of the Roman dogma, and face the external attacks constituted by the Turks and their Muslim religion, which threatened the spiritual primacy and temporal power of Rome. The strategy and attitude of the Church, especially before the Counterreformation, appeared to be, on one hand, 'highlighting the difference' of external enemies – namely, Jews and Muslims – and, on the other, 'erasing the difference' of the internal enemies posed by the many heresies within Christianity, as much as possible.[131] The attitude was well known in Ariosto's time in cities across Italy that, for their own various reasons, hosted non-Catholic Christian communities. The major Italian commercial cities (Venice, Milan, Genoa, Livorno, Rome and Naples) and, more generally, the whole north of the peninsula were all accustomed to hosting communities of other religions, mainly Jews and Muslims, as well as communities of Protestants, mainly Lutherans and Calvinists.[132] These host communities had two diametrically opposed strategies to confront, frame and interact with these two very different categories of community. As Stefano Villani explains, residents from different religions were

[131] Some counter this characterization. Among them, see Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*; and Evans and Wakefield, *Heresies*.

[132] For what concerns Ferrara, we can just mention the specific case of Renée of France who, since 1528, offered protection at the Este court to heterodox Christians (especially the early followers of John Calvin). See also 22, 57n113 and 105-107 here. On the diffusion and mobility of believers of other religions and non-Catholic Christians in Italy, see Lucia Frattarelli Fischer and Stefano Villani, "People of every mixture.' Immigration, Tolerance and Religious Conflicts in Early Modern Livorno," in Anne Katherine Isaacs, ed., *Immigration and Emigration in Historical Perspective* (Pisa: Plus, 2007), 93-108; Vincenzo Giura, *Storie di minoranze: ebrei, greci, albanesi nel Regno di Napoli* (Naples: ESI, 1987); Serena Luzzi, *Stranieri in città. Presenza tedesca e società urbana a Trento (secoli XV-XVIII)* (Bologna: Mulino, 2003); Germano Maifreda, ed., *Mercanti, eresia, Inquisizione nell'Italia moderna*, special issue of *Storia economica* 1 (2014); Rita Mazzei, *Itinera mercatorum. Circolazione di uomini e beni nell'Europa centro-orientale: 1550-1650* (Lucca: Pacini Fazzi, 1999); Giuseppina Minchella, *Frontiere aperte. Musulmani, ebrei e cristiani nella Repubblica di Venezia (XVII secolo)* (Rome: Viella, 2014); Filena Patroni Griffi, Antonella Pellettieri and Valeria Verrastro, ed., *Minoranze etniche del Melfese. Ebrei, greci, albanesi tra medioevo ed età moderna* (Milan: Angeli, 2002); Kim Siebenhüner, "Conversion, Mobility, and the Roman Inquisition in Italy around 1600," *Past & Present* 200 (2008), 5-35; and Maartje Van Gelder, *Trading Places: The Netherlandish Merchants in Early Modern Venice* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

expected to clearly identify themselves as adherents of their specific religion and were confined in specific areas – like the Jewish ghettos around the Italian peninsula or the Fondaco dei Turchi in Venice[133] – but non-Catholic Christians were simply asked to be discreet about their religious identity and, as they were formally forbidden from residing in any Italian state, they were not restricted to any one area of the city: "there were, therefore, no Protestant ghettos in Italy. On the contrary, Protestants were asked to be as invisible as possible. Formally admitting the presence of organized Protestant congregations would not only have been a violation of canon law; it would have meant admitting that it was possible to be Christian without being Catholic."[134]

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[133] The first ghetto established was in Venice in 1516, when the Republic forced the Jews, some of which had been residing in its territories for at least two centuries, to move in a specific area of the city, where previously the public foundries were located. *Gèto* was the name the Venetians gave to foundries, which the Ashkenazi Jews from Germany pronounced, with a hard g, *ghetto*. The word *fondaco*, coming from the Arabic word *funduq* (warehouse), and from the Greek word *πάνδοκος* (hotel), was used to indicate buildings that served both as warehouses and houses for foreign merchants since the eleventh century. Every important maritime city of Italy (Venice, Genoa, Pisa, Amalfi, Ragusa, Ancona) had *fondaci* all around the Mediterranean Sea and foreign *fondaci* within its territory. The Fondaco dei Turchi in Venice was just a late epigone of its medieval predecessors, envisioned by Venetian authorities only in 1608 and finally created in 1621. On the Fondaco dei Turchi, see Mathieu Grenet, "Institution de la coexistence et pratiques de la difference: le Fondaco dei Turchi de Venise (XVIIe–XVIIIe siecles)," *Revue d'histoire maritime* 17 (2013): 273-301; and Giorgio Vercellin, "Mercanti turchi e sensali a Venezia," *Studi veneziani* 4 (1980): 45-78.

[134] Stefano Villani, "To Be a Foreigner in Early Modern Italy: Were There Ghettos for Non-Catholic Christians?", in Nicholas Terpstra, ed., *Global Reformations: Transforming Early Modern Religions, Societies, and Cultures* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 115-133, especially 122-123. On these two opposite strategies, see, regarding Rome, Irene Fosi, *Convertire lo straniero. Forestieri e Inquisizione a Roma in età moderna* (Rome: Viella, 2011); and Matteo Sanfilippo, "Il controllo politico e religioso sulle comunità straniere a Roma e nella penisola," in Massimiliano Ghilardi, Gaetano Sabatini, Matteo Sanfilippo and Donatella Strangio, ed., *Ad ultimos usque terrarum terminos in fide propaganda. Roma fra promozione e difesa della fede in età moderna* (Viterbo: Sette Città, 2014), 85-110. On Venice, see Giorgio Fedalto, *Ricerche storiche sulla posizione giuridica ed ecclesiastica dei Greci a Venezia nei secoli XV e XVI* (Florence: Olschki, 1967); Giorgio Fedalto, "Le minoranze straniere a Venezia tra politica e legislazione," in Hans-Georg Beck, Manoussos Manoussacas and Agostino Pertusi, ed., *Venezia, centro di mediazione tra Oriente e Occidente (sec. XV-XVI): aspetti e problemi* (Florence: Olschki, 1977), 143-162; Minchella, *Frontiere*; and Van Gelder, *Trading Places*. On Padua, see Giovanni Angeli, *Lettere del Sant'Ufficio di Roma all'inquisizione di Padova (1567-1660)* (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 2013); and Michaela Valente, "Un sondaggio sulla prassi Cattolica del nicodeismo: 'Che li Scolari Tedeschi si debbano tollerare a vivere luteranamente, in secreto però,'" in Susanna Peyronel Rambaldi, ed., *Cinquant'anni di storiografia italiana sulla Riforma e i movimenti ereticali in Italia, 1950-2000* (Turin: Società di Studi Valdesi, 2002), 175-216. On Livorno, see Michela D'Angelo, *Mercanti inglesi a Livorno, 1573-1737: alle origini di una British Factory* (Messina: Istituto di Studi Storici Gaetano Salvemini, 2004); Lucia Frattarelli Fischer, *Vivere fuori del Ghetto. Ebrei a Pisa e Livorno (secoli XVI-XVIII)* (Turin: Zamorani, 2008); Frattarelli Fischer and Villani, "People"; Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Stefano Villani, "Religione e politica: le comunità protestanti a Livorno nel XVII e XVIII secolo," in Daniele Pesciatini, ed., *Livorno dal Medioevo all'età contemporanea. Ricerche e riflessioni* (Pisa: Banco di Sardegna, 2003), 36-64; and Stefano Villani, "Unintentional Dissent: Eating Meat and Religious Identity among British in Early Modern Livorno,"

Though formally prohibited from residing, travelling, trading or worshipping openly in any of the Italian states, Protestants were usually tolerated in everyday life but only at the cost of their invisibility, assuming they superficially assimilated to norms.[135] History records two major exceptions to this practice towards Protestants and other non-Catholic Christians: the open-air Waldensian ghetto in the Duchy of Savoy, condemned by Rome, and the Fondaco dei Tedeschi in Venice,[136] an institution that dates from 1228 but that, after Luther's reformation, greatly concerned the Roman Curia, who saw it as a center of dangerous heretic propaganda.[137]

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in Katherine Aron-Beller and Christopher Black, ed., *The Roman Inquisition: Centre versus Peripheries* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 373-394. On Naples, see Giura, *Storie*; and Patroni Griffi, Pellettieri and Verrastro, *Minoranze.*

[135] The practice of tolerance towards people of different faiths in early modern Europe, as Benjamin Kaplan explains, had nothing to do with the acceptance and the positive consideration of differences but was more a pragmatic necessity: withstanding a disliked diversity that should not exist at all. See Benjamin Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 8.

[136] The Waldesian ghetto was created by the peace treaty signed in Cavour on 5 June 1561 between representatives of the Waldesian communities and the Duke of Savoy. Arguably the first edict of tolerance issued in Europe, the treaty granted religious freedom to the Waldenses who resided in specific areas. On the Waldesian communities within the Italian territory in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, see Augusto Armand-Hugon, "Popolo e chiesa alle Valli dal 1532 al 1561," *Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi* 110 (1961): 5-34; Augusto Armand-Hugon, *Storia dei Valdesi, II. Dall'adesione alla Riforma all'Emancipazione (1532-1848)* (Turin: Claudiana, 1974); Euan Cameron, *The Reformation of the Heretics: The Waldenses of the Alps, 1480-1580* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984); Euan Cameron, *Waldenses: Rejections of the Holy Church in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); Martino Laurenti, *Il confine della comunità. Conflitto europeo e guerra religiosa nelle comunità valdesi del Seicento* (Turin: Claudiana, 2015); Arturo Pascal, "Comunità eretiche e chiese cattoliche nelle Valli Valdesi, secondo le Relazioni delle visite pastorali del Peruzzi e del Broglia," *Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi* 30 (1912): 61-63; Susanna Peyronel Rambaldi and Marco Fratini, ed., *1561. I valdesi tra resistenza e sterminio: in Piemonte e in Calabria* (Turin: Claudiana, 2010); and Pierroberto Scaramella, *L'inquisizione romana e i valdesi di Calabria (1554-1703)* (Naples: Editoriale Scientifica, 1999). On *fondaci* in general and the *Fondaco dei Tedeschi* in Venice, see Donatella Calabi, "Gli stranieri e la città," in Alberto Tenenti and Ugo Tucci, *Il Rinascimento: società ed economia*, vol. 5 of *Storia di Venezia* (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1996), 913-946; Donatella Calabi, "Gli stranieri nella capitale della repubblica veneta nella prima età moderna," *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome: Italie et Méditerranée* 111.2 (1999): 721-732; Giorgio Fedalto, "Stranieri a Venezia e a Padova," in Girolamo Arnaldi and Manlio Pastore Stocchi, ed., *Storia della cultura veneta* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1976-1986), 4.2:251-279; Uwe Israel, "Fondaci: città nelle città sulle sponde del Mediterraneo," in Donatella Calabi and Elena Svalduz, ed., *Luoghi, spazi, architetture*, vol. 5 of *Il Rinascimento italiano e l'Europa* (Costabissara: Colla, 2010), 107-123; Benjamin Ravid, "Venice and Its Minorities," in Eric Dursteler, ed., *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400-1797* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 449-851; Gerhard Rösch, "Il Fondaco dei Tedeschi," in Gaetano Cozzi, ed., *Venezia e la Germania: arte, politica, commercio, due civiltà a confronto* (Milan: Electra, 1986), 51-72; and Andrea Zannini, *Venezia città aperta. Gli stranieri e la Serenissima, XIV-XVIII sec.* (Venice: Marcianum, 2009).

[137] As Stefan Oswald indicates, in fact, as early as 1529, Pope Clement VII complained that the Fondaco dei Tedeschi was a center of heretical propaganda and, more than a century later, in 1634, the problem was still unresolved if the apostolic nuncio of Venice wrote to the Congregation of the Holy Office that almost all the merchants at the Fondaco in Rialto were heretics. See Stefan Oswald, *L'inquisizione, i vivi e i morti: protestanti tedeschi a Venezia* (Venice: Comunità Evangelica Luterana di Venezia, 2012), 60.

While readers might expect the *Furioso* to employ with Saracens the same strategy of 'highlighting to control' also reserved for Jews – highlighting their difference to control and confine them – it instead treats them as if they were merely heretics, erasing their difference to assimilate them. In the *Furioso*, the portrayal of Saracens enacts a shifting process between the time of the fiction and Ariosto's own present. The shift negotiates the Saracens' religion as well as their aesthetic aspect, as discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation. Indeed, just as the whitewashing of the invading Saracens recalls the major European powers threatening the independence of the small Italian states, among them the Duchy of Ferrara,[138] so too does the Saracen religion, having been emptied of its internal values and returned as just a lack of Christianity, appears to mimic the role of the reformist movements at that time threatening Christianity – and especially Ferrara, a political entity under the influence of the Papal States – from within. These problems were more pressing within Ariosto's cultural environment than the Turks and their Muslim religion and the text confronts them rather typically for its time by adopting a colonial attitude.

Gano of Maganza

At the crossroads of these two different temporalities, the chronological setting of the fiction and Ariosto's present day, and at an intersection between Saracen and Christian, stands the character of Gano of Mainz, an enemy so similar that he can hide within the ranks of Christians. Gano (Ganelon in the *Chanson de Roland*) is a seemingly secondary character of the *Furioso*. He appears just three times in the poem: in defense of Paris beside Charlemagne (15.8); attacking Rodomonte with other paladins shortly thereafter (18.10); and, at the very end of the work, at the wedding of Ruggiero and Bradamante (46.67), when Ariosto devotes some allusive verses to his future

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[138] See the second chapter of this dissertation.

betrayal of Charlemagne and Christianity. Gano is in fact the famous Christian knight who will betray Charlemagne for the Saracens and will cause Orlando's death at Roncevaux, narrated in the *Chanson de Roland*. Ariosto's predecessor Boiardo records in the *Innamorato* (3.1.3) that Gano will also kill Ruggiero seven years after his conversion and marriage to Bradamante, Orlando's cousin, a prediction that Ariosto repeats variously in the *Furioso* (3.24 and 41.61). Gano and, by extension, his entire family are portrayed throughout the Carolingian cycle and Italian Renaissance chivalric epics as treacherous, disloyal characters disrespectful of the chivalric code and as internal enemies of the French Crown and Christianity.

Gano was an antagonist well-known since the Middle Ages, identified as a symbol of betrayal in different contexts, probably the most famous of which is Dante's Cocytus, in the depth of Hell, where he figures as traitor of his own country (*Inferno* 32). Given his notoriety and, especially, his reputation, the portrayal of Gano is quite prominent within the *Furioso*, even despite his scarce presence, for the character connects the *Furioso* with the epic tradition of which Ariosto's poem imagines itself the latest descendant.[139] More importantly for this dissertation, Gano's status as 'internal enemy' appears to conform perfectly to the attitude of this text, one in which the line of demarcation between Christians and Saracens is blurred and in which readers find the contemporaneous threats to Christianity and Ferrara by major European powers and reformist movements (white and Christian) more worrisome than an enemy with a different appearance or culture.[140]

His name in the poem, again, offers a useful starting point to analyze and understand his identity and his role. Within the *Furioso* and the whole Carolingian tradition more generally, Gano

[139] Gano is also the central character in the *Cinque canti*, five cantos Ariosto composed probably between 1518 and 1519 but never used to integrate the *Furioso* or as a beginning for a new poem, and which were later published in 1545 as an appendix to an edition curated by his son Virginio and published by Paolo Manuzio.
[140] See chapters 1 and 2 here.

and the members of his family are identified with two different toponyms related to the territory they ruled: they are denoted as “of Maganza” or as “Maganzesi” – hailing from modern-day Mainz,[141] which Ariosto would have known as the territories of the Holy Roman Empire – and “of Pontieri”, a fiefdom known today as Ponthieu that was part of the French region of Picardy, the same region that houses Clermont (called Chiaramonte in the *Furioso*), the birthplace of Orlando and the identifier of his lineage.[142] This double identity is owing to the fact that Gano was originally from Germany, where he was Duke of Mainz, but, later, he also became Duke of Ponthieu, in the heart of France, by marrying Berta, mother to Orlando and sister to Charlemagne, after she was widowed by the death of Orlando’s father, Milone d’Anglante.

Gano is thus Charles’s brother-in-law and Orlando’s stepfather but he and all his Maganzesi family are also historically enemies of Orlando’s family, the Chiaramontesi. Ariosto explicitly announces this relationship early in the poem:[143]

> Tra casa di Maganza e di Chiaramonte
> era odio antico e inimicizia intensa,
> e più volte s’avean rotta la fronte,
> e sparso di lor sangue copia immense
>
> (2.67: Between the Clairmont and Maganza House
> The enmity was ancient and intense.
> Many a time they’d split each other’s brows;
> The toll of blood between them was immense).

[141] In the eighth century, when the *Furioso* is set, Mainz was a very important city in the Holy Roman Empire, capital of the Electorate of Mainz and seat of the Archbishop-Elector of Mainz, the Primate of Germany.

[142] Ponthieu was an ancient county that became the first hereditary fiefdom of the French Kingdom. Its capital was Abbeville. Clermont, also known as Clermont-en-Beauvaisis or Clermont-de-l'Oise, was an important military post in the Middle Ages, and a contested city during the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453) and the Wars of Religion (1562-1598). A branch of the de Clermont (Chiaramonte) dynasty moved to Sicily in 1062, when the Norman Ruggiero d’Altavilla conquered the island previously occupied by the Saracens.

[143] Given that certain enemies of the d’Este family had spread lies linking them to Gano and the lineage of Maganza, Ariosto was particularly interested in opposing Maganzesi to the Chiaramonte heroes, whom Ruggiero, the d’Este primogenitor, will join by marrying Bradamante.

Gano's marriage with Berta appears to be a political move, an attempt to strengthen the vassal relationship between Charlemagne and the House of Mainz. But the double denomination "of Pontieri" and "of Maganza" is the sign of failure. The new name (Gano of Pontieri) should be the sign of a successful familiarization process but cannot completely erase the original identity, which keeps recurring.

Gano's assimilation or Frenchification is incomplete, and he is unable to perform his duties as subject of Charlemagne. He will remain an enemy of the Chiaramonte family and an internal enemy to the French Kingdom and, by association, to Christianity. This time the enemy not only has the same white appearance, as was seen with Angelica in the previous chapter, but also the same Christian religion. Gano is the stain, the small discordant detail that can provide a new meaning to the whole picture. His character, in fact, suggests that being white and Christian cannot guarantee goodness or loyalty: the enemy can be hiding within Christian lines. Like the other Maganzesi, Gano is thus a very important character, a character who offers a different point of view that can bridge the chronological setting of the fiction and Ariosto's contemporary present, also bridging the enemies common to each period: the Maganzesi and the enemies of Ariosto's Ferrara and Italy, who were both aesthetically similar and Christian.

Chapter 4. Good Saracens and bad Christians:

Rodomonte and Ruggiero as cross-border characters

In the Middle Ages portrayed in the *Orlando furioso* – where religion has lost its ability to define the characters' moral value and where the chivalric code has become the moral compass by which a character is judged[144] – to be from the West or the East is no longer enough to establish one as 'good' or 'bad', 'right' or 'wrong'[145]. Between 'good Christians' and 'bad Saracens', then, exists a blurry zone containing 'bad Christians' and, more importantly, 'good Saracens': a space that allows the encounter with the 'other', and that also allows the crossing of the border.[146] The encounter and the assimilation only seem possible through identification with the 'other': making the Saracens as similar as possible to the Christians – erasing their skin color and removing the internal characteristics of their religion[147] – but also, at other times, portraying Christians as more similar to what is usually considered Saracen, that is, Christians who are 'wrong' (as happens with Gano and the whole House of Mainz).[148]

What the *Furioso* presents as the 'other' is actually another self. After all, diversity is exclusively a moral matter, and it reverberates in the chivalric code of courteous behavior. What defines the knights' identities is just a matter of individual choices – it is an internal fight, the same psychomachia that Orlando, the title protagonist, fights within himself. If, as Italo Calvino

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[144] On the commonality of chivalric values in both camps, see, among others, Paul Larivaille, "Guerra e ideologia nel «Furioso»," *Chroniques italiennes*, web series 19 (2011): 1-20, chroniquesitaliennes.univ-paris3.fr/PDF/web19/Larivailleweb19.pdf.

[145] The wording refers to the famous passage of the *Chanson de Roland* that pronounces that "Paien unt tort e crestiens unt dreit" (verse 1015: Pagans are wrong and Christians are right); see Léon Gautier, ed., *La chanson de Roland* (Nîmes: Lacour, 2003).

[146] Sometimes this blurred zone is embodied in physical places – as is the case for many of the forest environments and for Atlante's castle (see p. 51 text and note 100) – and appears to be perceived and portrayed through a sort of 'internal orientalism'. A similar concept is used by Cesar Dominguez to address the relationship between Spain as a whole and its internal region Andalusia; see Cesar Dominguez, "The South European Orient: A Comparative Reflection on Space in Literary History," *Modern Language Quarterly* 67:4 (2006): 419-449.

[147] See the second and third chapter of this dissertation, respectively.

[148] See 68-71 here.

suggested, "being of different faiths, in the Furioso, means little more than the different color of the pieces on a chessboard" (l'essere 'di fè diversi' non significa molto di più, nel Furioso, che il diverso colore dei pezzi in una scacchiera)[149] and if, as was discussed in the second and third chapter of this dissertation, the color of the pieces blurs when everyone is white and religion is emptied of its internal values, then everything is reduced to the place occupied on the chessboard and the individual moves of the various pieces, such as the characters' role within the plot and their choices and actions.

Useful for this interpretation is Alessandra Villa's recent study on the idea of "barbarie" (barbarity) in the *Furioso*.[150] Analyzing the occurrences in the text of the term "barbaro" (barbaric) in the different editions and contexts where it appears, Villa highlights how the term – when not used as a toponym[151] – is usually[152] a synonym of 'cruel', 'fierce', 'non courtly', and therefore is antithetical to 'courtly' (respectful of the chivalric code of behavior). She notices that the term is almost always[153] employed to describe generic masses, not individual characters, and, more importantly, that it is used both for Christian and Saracen masses, in defiance of convention. She also highlights that in the *Furioso* the "linea della barbarie" (line of barbarity) – which in medieval

[149] Lodovico Ariosto and Italo Calvino, *Orlando furioso di Ludovico Ariosto raccontato da Italo Calvino* (Turin, Einaudi, 1970), xxiii-xxiv, my translation.
[150] The idea of "barbarie" (barbarity) has a long tradition but, in the *Furioso*, it specifically betrays Petrarch's influence, especially canzone 128 from the *Fragmenta*. See also Di Gesù, "Crisi," 24.
[151] As Villa explains, the adjective 'barbaric' in many occurrencies does not have a negative meaning and merely indicates Charlemagne's enemies. Agramante, for one, reigns over Barbaria (18, 57, 5), "terra d'infedeli e barbaresca" (20, 98, 3: "in barbaric lands which are beset / By infidels). In the ancient names for Northern Africa, in fact, the etymological and pejorative meaning of 'barbaric' combined with the purely geographical and ethnic meaning, which became the term 'Berber'; see Alessandra Villa, "Variazioni sull'idea di barbarie nell'«Orlando furioso»," *Chroniques italiennes*, web series 19 (2011): 1-20, chroniquesitaliennes.univ-paris3.fr/PDF/web19/Villaweb19.pdf, 4.
[152] As Villa explains, the term 'barbaric' is usually employed to describe Saracen masses inside the *fabula* and outside it – in the extradiegetic additions, where Ariosto voices his contemporaneous concerns over the European Christian masses invading the Italian peninsula; see Villa, "Variazioni," 6-7.
[153] Villa notes two exceptions: Rodomonte, in the Isabella episode (28, 95-29, 39) discussed below; and the episode in which Mandricardo, addressed as a "crudel barbaro" (cruel barbarian) (14, 37, 6) surveys Orlando's devastation of the Saracen field and feels a "strana invidia" (weird envy) (14, 36, 7), showing no sorrow for his fellow Saracen soldiers. Mandricardo is in fact the prototype of the uncourtly character and, not by chance, is also the cause of Rodomonte's 'barbarization' when he kidnaps Rodomonte's betrothed, Doralice, several stanzas later (14, 50-54).

and early modern Europe moved from North to South, East to West, depending on the imminence of either the would-be Muslim threat or the religious and political conflicts within Christianity – should ideally be at the exact center between the Muslim East and the Christian West. But in place of the geographical origin, ethnicity or religion of the characters, this line instead corresponds to their adherence to the chivalric code:

> Intesa come ferocia o come scortesia, la barbarie non è quindi l'appannaggio di un campo, non dipende dalla provenienza geografica né dalla religione, ma dalla condivisione o meno dell'ideologia cavalleresca, ed essendo questa in generale comune ai cristiani e ai pagani, la barbarie è di solito una caratteristica delle masse indistinte, cristiane o pagane che siano
>
> (Understood as ferocity or as uncourtliness, barbarity is therefore not the prerogative of a field, it does not depend on geographical origin or religion, but on the sharing or not of the chivalric ideology. The chivalric ideology being generally common to Christians and pagans, barbarism is usually a characteristic of the indistinct masses, whether Christian or pagan).[154]

Just like courtesy, barbarity is a cross-border characteristic,[155] for it does not identify or pertain to either culture alone: it can lodge in a Christian soul and guide the actions of a Christian knight, even, as will be discussed, those of as prominent a soldier as Orlando.

The similarity between Christians and Saracens is not limited to their morality (chivalric code and religion) or ethnicity (skin color and somatic traits) but extends to their customs and practices, and, especially, to their clothes. While Matteo Maria Boiardo's *Orlando innamorato* actually presents the Saracens as accustomed to different practices – even at the very beginning of the poem at the joust organized by Charlemagne in Paris, they are described as lying down "come mastini / Sopra a tappeti, come è lor usanza / Sprezando seco il costume di Franza" (1.1.13: like hounds / on carpets, as they always do, / scorning the customs Frenchmen use) – the *Furioso*

[154] Villa, "Variazioni," 6; see also 3. All translations of Villa are my own.
[155] See the episode concerning Rinaldo and Ferraù described above at 51-53.

instead never highlights any exotic habit or clothing and even notes one aspect uncommon enough to warrant specific mention: at the tournament organized by Norandino in Damascus, Syrians have Western armor and arms[156]. In the *Furioso*, in fact, Saracen and Christian knights all compete over and exchange such weapons and military vestments, alternatively possessing the same swords, shields, armors and horses.

Visual confirmation of the aesthetical similarity between Christians and Saracens in the poem can also be found in the woodcuts in the earliest editions of the poem (Zoppino 1536, Giolito 1542, Valvassori 1553, Valgrisi 1556, Rampazetto 1564/1570, Varisco 1568, De Franceschi 1584). The most telling for this research is probably the first woodcut in these printings, which portrays – either individually (as in the editions of Zoppino, Giolito, Rampazetto and Varisco) or combined with other episodes (Valvassori, Valgrisi, De Franceschi) – the initial encounter between Ferraù and Rinaldo, discussed in the third chapter of this dissertation. The two knights, one Christian and one Saracen, are almost indistinguishable in their aesthetical aspect: they wear identical or at least very similar military vestments and have similar weapons. Like many Christians and Saracens portrayed in visual *apparatus* of the poem, Rinaldo and Ferraù are so similar that Zoppino's early edition of the poem even named the characters below their image to facilitate identification.[157]

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[156] The two famous verses are: "Soriani in quel tempo aveano usanza / d'armarsi a questa guise di Ponente" (17.73.1-2: the Syrians / Had then assumed this custom of the West). Stanza 73 begins the extradiegetic invective discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation, a passage where Ariosto laments the Saracen's occupation of the Holy Land; see 16-19.

[157] For an in-depth analysis of the illustrations in the earliest editions of the *Furioso*, see Ilaria Andreoli, "L'*Orlando furioso* 'di figure adornato' (1516-2016). Rassegna critico-bibliografica dei più recenti contributi sull'illustrazione del poema ariostesco", *L'illustrazione* 1.1 (2017): 127-148; Federica Caneparo, "Il *Furioso* in bianco e nero: l'edizione illustrata pubblicata da Nicolò Zoppino nel 1530," *Schifanoia* 34/35 (2008): 165-172; Federica Caneparo, *"Di molte figure adornato". L'*Orlando furioso *nei cicli pittorici tra Cinque e Seicento* (Milan: Officina Libraria, 2015); Serena Pezzini, "Disegni diversi. Un percorso tra le illustrazioni cinquecentesche del *Furioso* nel Cinquecento," in Lina Bolzoni, ed., *Galassia Ariosto. Il modello editoriale dell'Orlando Furioso dal libro illustrato al web* (Rome: Donzelli, 2017), 35-62; Martyna Urbaniak, "Il 'Furioso' di Giovanni Varisco (1568) e la tradizione illustrativa cinquecentesca del poema di Ariosto," in Lorenzo Battistini, Vincenzo Caputo, Margherita De Blasi, Giuseppe Andrea Liberti, Pamela Palomba, Valentina Panarella and Aldo Stabile, ed., *La letteratura italiana e le arti. Atti del XX Congresso dell'ADI*

In the *Furioso*, the difference between Christians and Saracens is not aesthetic or moral and is arguably not even cultural. Ariosto's medievalism seems to portray a transcultural environment, which does not envision a clear border between cultures. It is a fluid space where aesthetic and moral values are shared, and individual choices are responsible for the characters' cultural identity[158]. The Saracen knights, aesthetically almost indistinguishable from the Christians, are still generally portrayed as less virtuous, less respectful of the chivalric code and less attached to their religion, though there are many exceptions. Such exceptions we should consider to be cross-border characters.

Cross-border characters are those who straddle the border – bad Christians and good Saracens – and the ones who actually cross that border – good Saracens who convert (there are no Christian characters who convert to Islam). Examples on the Christian side include knights who, despite their profession of faith, do not conform to the chivalric ideal: knights who out of their desire for Angelica do not keep their word, knights who deceive or commit injustices – like the House of Mainz and, specifically, Gano, discussed at the end the third chapter of this dissertation – or knights who lose all sense of duty, chief among them Orlando, with extreme consequences that see the premier paladin of France completely, if only temporarily, losing his mind and, with it, his identity, then crossing the border and becoming a monstrous beast who uproots trees and drags around dead horses. The opposing side features Saracens like Rodomonte, a knight strictly committed to the chivalric code who toes the border but will never cross it; Ferraù who, thanks to

- *Associazione degli Italianisti (Napoli, 7-10 settembre 2016)* (Rome: Adi, 2018), italianisti.it/pubblicazioni/atti-di-congresso/la-letteratura-italiana-e-le-arti/Urbaniak%20(compresso).pdf; Lina Bolzoni, ed., *L'*Orlando furioso *nello specchio delle immagini* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani, 2014); Lina Bolzoni, Serena Pezzini and Giovanna Rizzarelli, ed., *«Tra mille carte vive ancora». Ricezione del* Furioso *tra immagini e parole* (Lucca, Pacini Fazzi, 2010); Lina Bolzoni and Carlo Alberto Girotto, ed., *Donne cavalieri incanti follia. Viaggio attraverso le immagini dell'*Orlando Furioso (Lucca: Pacini Fazzi, 2012); and Daniela Caracciolo and Massimiliano Rossi, ed., *Le sorti d'Orlando. Illustrazioni e riscritture del* Furioso (Lucca: Pacini Fazzi, 2013).

[158] The transcultural aspects of the *Furioso* will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, when Ruggiero's identity will also be analyzed (96-97).

his courtly manners, can collaborate with Rinaldo; and Marfisa and Ruggero, the Saracen twins who will actually cross the border by converting and founding the d'Este genealogy.

Rodomonte

One of the most important cross-border Saracen characters is the son of Ulieno and king of Sarza and Algiers, Rodomonte – or Rodamonte as he is named by the poet who invented him. Boiardo, who at the beginning of second book of the *Innamorato* introduces the character as "un giovane arguto" (a sharp young man), as full of "ardir" (courage) as anyone else, "superbo ed orgoglioso tanto, / che disprezava il mondo tutto quanto" (2.1.52: so arrogant and proud, / that he despised the whole world), and with the body and the strength of a giant ("persona ha de gigante e forte nerbo") (2.1.56). Boiardo portrays him as a negative moral example: he is too young[159], arrogant and proud to follow the chivalric code of behavior with perfect strictness. When he fights, he follows no rules, as he himself explains to Ranaldo (renamed Rinaldo in the *Furioso*), warning him that he will not spare his horse during their fight:

> Ma sino ad ora te faccio sapere
> Che il tuo destrier da me non fia servato;
> La usanza vostra non estimo un fico,
> Il peggio che io so far, faccio al nemico.
>
> (2.14.50: But let me tell you, I won't spare
> your horse, since I don't care a fig
> for any customs that you keep.
> I do my worst to enemies).

In the *Furioso* – where Rodomonte has a much more important role than in the *Innamorato* – Ariosto develops him differently.

[159] Boiardo specifically highlights Rodomonte's youth in his first two mentions (*OI* 2,1.52; 56), suggesting that he is "acerbo" (*OI* 2.1.56: immature).

When Ariosto introduces the reader to Rodomonte, during Agramante's review of his troops, he is immediately presented as a Saracen alter ego of Orlando:[160]

> Non avea il campo d'Africa più forte,
> né Saracin più audace di costui;
> e più temean le parigine porte,
> et avean più cagion di temer lui,
> che Marsilio, Agramante e la gran corte
> ch'avea seguito in Francia questi due:
> e più d'ogni altro che facesse mostra,
> era nimico della fede nostra
>
> (14.26: None mightier among the Africans,
> Among the Saracens none bolder was.
> Before the gates of Paris, in all France
> None other was more feared, and greater cause
> For fear his prowess was than Agramant's
> Or King Marsilio's. Our faith, our laws,
> Our paladins this infidel assailed
> And in his combats often he prevailed).

He is the strongest Saracen knight, even stronger than his leaders Agramante and Marsilio – just as Orlando is relative to Charlemagne (both are blurry versions of Achilles) – and he is the worst enemy of Christianity, just like Orlando from the Saracen viewpoint.[161] Rodomonte's only fault is being on the wrong side, being an enemy of Christianity. He is not even properly Muslim. Indeed, Ariosto appears to deliberately highlight him as irreligious – more precisely, "nimico d'ogni fede" (28.99: the unbelieving pagan) and makes him curse God all throughout the work, from his

[160] In the *Furioso*, Rodomonte's trajectory, at least until a certain point, resembles Orlando's. He is in love with Doralice, the Saracen princess of Granada, and looks for her all around the world. When he finally finds her, he loses her to another man, Mandricardo, and, like Orlando, he loses his mind, loses all sense of duty, forgetting his mission and his god, and becomes an errant knight. Other characters in the *Furioso*, among them Rodomonte, Mandricardo and Ruggiero, can be considered alter egos of Orlando or contenders for his role as the strongest knight and protagonist of the poem. This topic will be discussed in a future analysis I am currently preparing.

[161] Throughout the work, Rodomonte's extraordinary strength, body size and ferocity are usually highlighted through feral metaphors. The most recurrent animals used to refer to him are a lion, his code of arms (14.114); a tiger; a wolf, as in during the assault of Paris (18.14; 18.19); a bull, as during his retreat from Paris or when Doralice humiliates him by choosing Mandricardo (27.111); and a bear, as in his fight with Orlando (29.46).

entrance in the poem, during the Saracen assault on Paris (14.117; 15.5), to his departure, before dying in the last stanza of the whole work.[162]

In the *Furioso*, Rodomonte is still “audace” (brave) (14.65), “superbo” (arrogant) (14.95; 27.83), and “orgoglioso” (proud) (27.75), but he appears changed, more mature. Ariosto highlights it almost immediately after introducing him in the fourteenth canto, making a direct parallel with Boiardo by describing Rodomonte’s coat of arms, which portrays Doralice, the woman he loves, holding a lion by the reins. Boiardo had described it with these words:

> Del re di Sarza in terra è 'l confalone,
> Ch'era vermiglio, e dentro una regina,
> Quale avea posto il freno ad un leone:
> Questa era Doralice de Granata,
> Da Rodamonte più che il core amata.
>
> Però ritratta nella sua bandiera
> La portava quel re cotanto atroce,
> Sì naturale e proprio come ella era,
> Che altro non li manca che la voce.
> E lei mirando, alla battaglia fiera
> Più ritornava ardito e più feroce,
> Ché per tal guardo sua virtù fioriva,
> Come l'avesse avante a gli occhi viva
>
> (2.7.28-29: The king of Sarza’s standard fell
> to earth, a scarlet sign that showed
> a lion bridled by a queen—
> Granada’s Doralice, loved
> more than his heart by Rodamonte.
>
> That savage monarch carried her
> portrait upon his gonfalone,
> so true to life, so natural,
> it only lacked her voice alone.
> Gazing at this, to fearsome battle
> bolder and fiercer he’d return,
> since one look could increase his prowess,
> as if he’d seen her in the flesh)

[162] 46.140. For other episodes in the *Furioso* when Rodomonte swears, displays unbelief, or is presented as irreligious, see 23.33, 28.101 and 29.18.

Ariosto, instead, adds a detail that should not be considered negligible in a chivalric epic:

Ne la bandiera, ch'è tutta vermiglia,
Rodomonte di Sarza il leon spiega,
che la feroce bocca ad una briglia
che gli pon la sua donna, aprir non niega.
Al leon sé medesimo assimiglia;
e per la donna che lo frena e lega,
la bella Doralice ha figurata,
figlia di Stordilan re di Granata:

Quella che tolto avea, come io narrava,
re Mandricardo, e dissi dove e a cui.
Era costei che Rodomonte amava
più che'l suo regno e più che gli occhi sui;
E cortesia e valor per lei mostrava,
non già sapendo ch'era in forza altrui:
se Saputo l'avesse, allora allora
fatto avria quel che fe' quel giorno ancora

(14.114-115: The banner of King Rodomonte, gules,
A mighty lion on its ground displays.
A lady with a bridle guides and rules
The king of beasts, which at her touch obeys,
For all it roars; and thus his lady schools
The king of Sarza in more temperate ways,
For Doralice is thus figured there,
Whom Rodomonte loves, as you're aware,

She whom King Mandricard, not long ago,
Had stolen and seduced, as I have said,
Whom Rodomonte loved and worshipped so,
To whom as her betrothed he had been wed,
As I narrated; little did he know
His promised bride now shared another's bed.
Had he but known, straightway he would have done
What that same day he did, but later on).

Rodomonte has become *cortese* (courtly), the result of Doralice's having changed him, in accordance with the theory of courtly love.

While in the *Innamorato* the love for Doralice had made him "ardito" (brave) and "feroce" (fierce), in the *Furioso* the same love makes him display "cortesia" (courtly manner) and "valor" (valor). Rodomonte has become a mature knight, capable of mitigating his irrational impetuosity,

adhering to the chivalric code of behavior and fulfilling his duties as king. Rodomonte displays his new responsible and courtly behavior in many different occasions throughout the poem. In one episode, despite his vow to steal the first horse he meets, he refuses to do so[163] when meeting a woman, Ippalca (23.34). In another, respectful of his duties as a member of Agramante's expedition and as King, he swallows his pride and refuses to fight with Ruggiero over the ownership of Frontino, trying to convince him to join their leader Agramante (26.92-98).[164] Later (27.75-76), when he is reluctant to fight with Sacripante, who has become his friend, to spare him a certain humiliation (though his concern is misunderstood by Sacripante as arrogance). He saves Brandimarte's life once he is moved by Fiordiligi's tears and prayers and, elsewhere, he shows that he shares the same value system as Bradamante, when they make a meticulous pact before dueling.[165]

Two important moments in Rodomonte's trajectory fail to conform with his new civilized and courtly behavior but these instances are strictly instrumental to the development of the plot, and, in fact, in each one of them, the narrator provides Rodomonte with a justification for his misbehavior. A first exception figures during the Saracen assault on Paris (cantos 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18), when Rodomonte is described as "crudele" (14.116: cruel, my translation), "non già men di Nembrotte / indomito, superbo e furibondo" (14.119: Proud as was Nimrod) and "l'africano Marte, / Rodomonte terribile et orrendo" (16.19: That Moorish Mars, so fierce and terrible). During the assault on Paris, Rodomonte is presented as the undoubtedly strongest Saracen knight,

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[163] The horse is Frontino, originally owned by Sacripante and called Frontalatte (27.71) and stolen from him by Brunello (27.72). In the end, Rodomonte will steal the horse from Ippalca, but only after discovering it to be currently the property of Ruggiero, whom he wants to confront, so he promises her that he will challenge Ruggiero for the horse and even promises, in the case of a loss, to pay rent for the time he used the horse (23.36).
[164] In this passage, Ruggiero is even compared to Job.
[165] See 31.73-75 and 35.43-46, respectively. Brandimarte was drowning after falling into a river in his fight with Rodomonte and was being crushed underwater by weight of his horse. It is noteworthy that Rodomonte who just seems to be looking for a new object of desire, promises to return Bradamante's weapons if he wins, as long as she converts her hate for him into love. This choice, so unusual for Rodomonte, suggests a change of heart.

validating the parallel with Orlando, but his fierceness, cruelty and thoughtlessness appear excessive.

He carelessly sends over a thousand of his soldiers to die in the moat between the first and the second walls of Paris (14.131-134; 15.3-5) and, when he crosses the city, he kills everyone he meets, regardless of gender, status or age:

> non riguarda né al servo né al signore,
> né al giusto ha più pietà ch'al peccatore.
>
> Religïon non giova al sacerdote,
> né la innocenzia al pargoletto giova:
> per sereni occhi o per vermiglie gote
> merce' né donna né donzella truova:
> la vecchiezza si caccia e si perquote;
> né quivi il Saracin fa maggior pruova
> di gran valor, che di gran crudeltate;
> che non discerne sesso, ordine, etade
>
> (16.24-25: To man or master no regard he pays,
> The just and the unjust alike he slays.
>
> No sanctuary now can save the priest,
> No innocence protect the little child,
> No woman's beauty move him to desist,
> No rosy cheeks, no glances sweet and mild;
> The old are slain in fury unappeased.
> By cruelty his valour is defiled,
> For, blind and undiscerning in his rage,
> He is deterred by neither sex nor age).[166]

Rodomonte appears out of control, possessed by some evil entity, as suggested by the religious parallels with Nimrod and Mars.

The explanation for his behavior—masterfully delayed, as usual, until the end of the assault—is revealed only in the stanzas bookending the proem of the following canto (17.1-6).

[166] It is important to note that Rodomonte's traversal of Paris is the third time we discuss a character crossing the enemy field, after Medoro and Orlando pass through the Christian and Saracen camps (see 33-35 above). The recurrent episode, a *topos* within the *Furioso*, appears to be particularly revealing to define the character's identity and psyche at the moment of the crossing.

Indeed, the first stanza of the seventeenth canto resolves all doubts, as the narrator explains that God sends tyrants and monsters as punishments when earthly sins have exceeded mere forgivability:

> Il giusto Dio, quando i peccati nostri
> hanno di remission passato il segno,
> acciò che la giustizia sua dimostri
> uguale alla pietà, spesso dà regno
> a tiranni atrocissimi et a mostri,
> e dà lor forza e di mal fare ingegno
>
> (17.1: Almighty God, when all our many sins
> Have passed beyond the point of being remitted,
> His justice (and His mercy) to evince,
> Our punishment to tyrants has committed.
> Thus in the days of ancient Rome, long since,
> The rule of monsters often He permitted).

Following a catalogue of tyrants and monsters, the prologue concludes:

> Doveano allora aver gli eccessi loro
> di Dio turbata la serena fronte,
> che scórse ogni lor luogo il Turco e 'l Moro
> con stupri, uccisïon, rapine et onte:
> ma più di tutti gli altri danni, fôro
> gravati dal furor di Rodomonte
>
> (17.6: The Christians must have caused by their excesses
> A clouding of the Father's countenance.
> On every side the Saracen oppresses
> With murder, rape and all incontinence;
> But worse than all the worst of these distresses
> Is Rodomonte's pitiless advance).

Rodomonte is part of a bigger plan: he is a weapon in God's hands: a fundamental component of God's retribution for Christianity's sins. Given his experience as the strongest Saracen knight, his famous rage and cruelty, and his role as the Saracen alter ego of Orlando, Rodomonte is the obvious candidate to epitomize God's fury and contempt – in fact, he is described as the worst part of God's punishment.

The second instance in which Rodomonte appears not to behave as the chivalric code would require spans the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth cantos, in his encounter with Isabella[167]. On horseback with a monk and carrying the body of her dead lover, Zerbino, Isabella reaches the small church near Montpellier, where Rodomonte, in the grip of madness after Doralice's betrayal, was residing and where he immediately falls in love with her. Rodomonte initially approaches Isabella "col più molle / parlar che seppe, e col miglior sembiante" (28.99.1-2: with gentle speech/And in his most ingratiating style) but, when the monk interrupts his attempt to convince her to abandon her devotion to God, he abruptly changes his attitude, and, in an outburst of anger, throws the monk far away. Just a few stanzas after this sudden violent gesture, however, Rodomonte appears to regain his calm and, "col parlar ch'è fra gli amanti usato" (29.8.5: in words much favoured by the amorous), he approaches Isabella again:

> E si mostrò sí costumato allora,
> che non le fece alcun segno di forza.
> Il sembiante gentil che l'innamora,
> l'usato orgoglio in lui spegne et ammorza:
> e ben che 'l frutto trar ne possa fuora,
> passar non però vuole oltre a la scorza;
> che non gli par che potesse esser buono,
> quando da lei non lo accettasse in dono
>
> (29.9: His manner was so gentle and controlled,
> No vestige of coercion it betrayed;
> His pride, so fierce and furious of old,
> Was humbled by the beauty of the maid.
> He knew he had the fruit within his hold,
> Yet not one move to pluck it he essayed.
> It seemed to him it might not taste so sweet
> If as a gift she did not offer it).

[167] See 28.95-29.39. The encounter with Isabella and her later murder is considered by many scholars the peak of Rodomonte's madness: a match to Orlando's madness and, as per Orlando, equally exceptional; see Villa, "Variazioni," 6n7. Isabella's episode, moreover, is the only instance of Rodomonte being described as "barbaric," as Villa highlights. See 73-74 above, especially 73n153.

Rodomonte appears calm and again in control of his instincts but, after few stanzas, has already lost his courtly manner once more (29.13) and Isabella, left alone with him and fearful for her own chastity, contrives her suicide plan.

In the middle of Isabella's episode, a cornerstone between the cantos, the proem of the twenty-ninth functions as a key to understand Rodomonte's volatile behavior and the episode as a whole. The first stanza, an invective against the volubility of human will, especially after an amorous rejection, clarifies that Rodomonte serves the narrator as an *exemplum*:

> O degli uomini inferma e instabil mente!
> come siàn presti a varïar disegno!
> Tutti i pensier mutamo facilmente,
> più quei che nascon d'amoroso sdegno.
> Io vidi dinanzi il Saracin sì ardente
> contra le donne, e passar tanto il segno,
> che non che spegner l'odio, ma pensai
> che non dovesse intiepidirlo mai
>
> (29.1: How vacillating is the mind of man!
> How rapid are the changes which it makes!
> How quickly jettisoned is every plan!
> How soon new love in angry hearts awakes!
> Through Rodomonte's veins such fire there ran,
> Such burning hatred of the female sex,
> I wondered whether there were any ways
> Of quenching, or of cooling, such a blaze).

In the second stanza, the narrator admits that, in telling the story of Rodomonte and Isabella, he intends to avenge all women – a gender indiscriminately condemned by Rodomonte – punishing the Saracen with a specific, extemporaneous authorial intervention:

> Donne gentil, per quel ch'a biasmo vostro
> parlò contra il dover, sì offeso sono,
> che sin che col suo mal non gli dimostro
> quanto abbia fatto error, non gli perdono.
> Io farò sí con penna e con inchiostro,
> ch'ognun vedrà che gli era utile e buono
> aver taciuto, e mordersi anco poi
> prima la lingua, che dir mal di voi

(29.2: Sweet ladies, for the evil which he spoke
Concerning you, I have been so irate
That I'll not pardon him till I invoke
All my best skill and fully demonstrate
In pen and ink to all who read my book
How wrong and how unfounded was his hate;
Far better were it to have bitten through
His tongue, or held it, than speak ill of you).

Just as God had guided Rodomonte's actions during the siege of Paris, so too does the narrator guide his actions at his encounter with Isabella "con penna e con inchiostro" (29.2.5: in pen and ink). What befalls him is part of his punishment. Rodomonte, in fact, will kill Isabella only by her tricking him into it and not because of any real uncourtliness, will or urge of his own. In this situation, Rodomonte appears more gullible than violent or discourteous and Ariosto, careful to balance Rodomonte's punishment with his new courtly identity goes out of his way to repeat – four times, in only seventeen stanzas (29.21-22; 25; 30; 37) – that Rodomonte's mind and credulity are altered by his uncharacteristic drunkenness. As soon as Rodomonte recovers from the alcohol, in fact, he is so afflicted that he transforms the little church where he was living into a grand tomb in memory of Isabella and Zerbino and promises to fight every passing knight, Saracen or Christian, to honor the lovers with the weapons he would win. The defeated Saracens he would enslave and the defeated Christians he would send to Algiers (29.31-39).

Immediately following Rodomonte's vow, Orlando, at the height of his madness, passes by the tomb (29.40-49). They fight with bare hands, like animals, and their clash ends in a draw. The event is particularly noteworthy for, by matching Orlando's strength, Rodomonte, the strongest and most valiant Saracen knight, officially ties with his French counterpart as the strongest knight of the poem and, therefore, establishes himself as the final enemy that must be defeated in order for a Christian champion to become the new protagonist of the poem and, indeed, of the whole Italian tradition of the Carolingian epic. By defeating him, that is, any Christian knight

could claim to be even stronger than Orlando. In fact, Rodomonte will only be defeated by Bradamante, at Isabella and Zerbino's tomb[168], and by Ruggiero, who will kill him in the last stanzas of the poem (46.115-140): the two characters destined to become the ancestors of the d'Este family and the new heroes of the poem.

Even in his last scene, Rodomonte displays a changed identity once more. In accusing Ruggiero of betrayal for switching sides and converting to Christianity, Rodomonte actually demonstrates his continued loyalty to his leader, Agramante, and to be respectful of the code of behavior proper to a knight. Rodomonte will be killed by Ruggiero, in a duel that closes the entire work and crowns the latter as a new Christian hero, but an alternative victory can be interpreted: given that Rodomonte is following the chivalric code by challenging Ruggiero for his betrayal and Ruggiero is breaking it by switching sides, Rodomonte can also be seen as a positive winner of the duel, a worthy example of chivalric behavior.[169]

The Rodomonte of the *Furioso* is no longer the same character from the *Innamorato*: he is more mature, more aware of his duties as king, and generally more respectful of the chivalric code of behavior. The cause and effect of this change in Rodomonte's behavior is the new role envisioned for him in the *Furioso*: a cross-border character, the Saracen alter ego to Orlando, and the final challenge for the strongest knight and protagonist of the poem. But for the two episodes discussed above, Rodomonte looks and behaves as a Western knight should. He could be converted and cross the border but never takes that last step: there can't be two Orlandos and, more importantly, for Saracen knights the role of crossing the border is reserved specifically for

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[168] 35.50-52. When Rodomonte is defeated by Bradamante, he again appears to lose his mind – Ariosto uses the term "folle". Once more in parallel with Orlando, Rodomonte then takes off his weapons and becomes a knight errant.

[169] Recently, scholars have advanced similar arguments. See Maria Pavlova, "«Il fior de Pagania»: Saracens and Their World in Boiardo and Ariosto (dissertation, University of Oxford, 2014); see also Maria Pavlova, "Rodomonte e Ruggiero. Una questione d'onore," *Rassegna europea di letteratura italiana* 42 (2013): 135-177; and Maria Pavlova, *Saracens and Their World in Boiardo and Ariosto* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2020).

Ruggiero and Marfisa who, as we will see, are prearranged[170], to be the objects of the familiarization process and, ultimately, of the assimilation of the 'other'.

Ruggiero

Ruggiero is the most prominent cross-border character in the *Furioso*. He is a Saracen knight who, by converting and marrying the Christian Bradamante, niece to Charlemagne, manages to cross the border between the two cultures. The character of Ruggiero was invented by Boiardo and introduced in the second book of the *Innamorato* to fulfill the genealogical ambition of the poem[171]: that is, to marry Bradamante and give the d'Este family their remote and important ancestors[172]. In the *Innamorato*, in fact, Boiardo presents Ruggiero's genealogy and descendants mainly through four excursus – Atlante's prophecy (2.21.53-60), the ekphrases of the images painted in Febosilla's loggia (2.25.41-56) and on the pavilion embroidered by the Cumaean Sibyl (2.27.51-59), and Ruggiero's own introduction to Bradamante (3.5.18-37) – at the end of which the Saracen knight is not just set to become the progenitor of the d'Este family but, thanks to its own genealogy, he represents a link in the chain that connects the origin of the House of Ferrara back to Astyanax, Hector, Priam and the Trojan dynasty of the Homeric poems, as Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti has highlighted.[173]

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[170] Due to their mixed origin – Christian father and Saracen mother – the twins Ruggiero and Marfisa lie exactly on the border between East and West and therefore are the best equipped to cross the border between them successfully.
[171] Ruggiero enters the Italian chivalric tradition when he is tricked by Brunello (another character invented by Boiardo) into jousting in his place in the tournament organized by Agramante, King of Africa. In an act of disobedience and rebellion towards his father figure, Atlante, Ruggiero descends from his mountaintop hiding place, wins the tournament and requests that the Saracen king knights him to join the war which he is about to start.
[172] As Riccardo Bruscagli has highlighted, Boiardo's *Innamorato* is one of the earliest examples of a new trend – the introduction of dynastic propaganda – which will become commonplace in works from later in the century; see Riccardo Bruscagli, "L'ecfrasi dinastica nel poema eroico del Rinascimento," in Gianni Venturi and Monica Farnetti, ed., *Ecfrasi. Modelli ed esempi fra Medioevo e Rinascimento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2004), 1:269-292, 1:269-270.
[173] Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti, "Rugiero o la fabbrica dell' 'Inamoramento de Orlando,'" in Simone Albonico and Cesare Bozzetti, ed., *Per Cesare Bozzetti: studi di letteratura e filologia italiana* (Milan: Mondadori, 1996), 69-90, 86. And as Marco Dorigatti points out, this legacy has important political implications: it traces the origins of Ruggiero, and therefore of the d'Este family, to a period prior to Christianity, implicitly claiming the autonomy of the family from the influence of the Church, of which Ferrara was a feudal holding. See Marco Dorigatti, "La favola e la

As Ruggiero explains to Bradamante in the third book of the *Innamorato* (3.5.18-37), he is the son of Ruggiero II of Risa,[174] the Christian knight of Trojan ancestry who was the protagonist of the *Chanson d'Aspremont*,[175] and the Saracen princess Galaciella, daughter of King Agolante who, after falling in love with Ruggiero II, converted to Christianity to marry him, betraying her father and her homeland. As the voice coming out of Atlante's tomb further explains to Ruggiero and Marfisa towards the end of the *Furioso*, the two are twins, both born "sopra le Sirti" on the shores of Libya, where Galaciella was found by a magician after her parents left her to the mercy of the waves.[176] Atlante adopted them and had a lioness nurse them [177], but they were separated early in their childhood: Marfisa was kidnapped by "una masnada d'Arabi" (36.63.3-4: a band of Arabs) and therefore raised as a Saracen, while Ruggiero grew up under Atlante's supervision, nourished only with "medolle e nerbi di leone" (*OI* 2.1.74.8: on lion meat and marrow) and educated "ad ogne maestria / che aver se puote in arte d'armeggiare" (*OI* 2.1.75.1-2: to skills / required in the art of arms) in a castle on Mount Carena built to keep him safe and isolated from the world. Mount Carena is in Italy, near Bagolino, in the Lombard province of Brescia, but presumably Atlante's castle was near the place where he found the twins and their dead mother, the Libyan shores, and therefore atop the North African Atlas Mountain chain that carries his name. In any case, Atlante explains in various passages (4.29; 36.64) that his agenda is to keep Ruggiero far away from his destiny[178] and, thus, from the world and its Christian-Saracen dichotomy.

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corte: intrecci narrative e genealogie estensi dal Boiardo all'Ariosto," in Gianni Venturi and Francesca Cappelletti, *Gli dei a corte: letteratura e immagini nella Ferrara estense* (Florence: Olsckhi, 2009), 31-54, 43-44.

[174] Risa was the name for Reggio Calabria under the Normans in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

[175] See 7, 44 above.

[176] 36.59-66 and 61.4. Bradamante is also present at the event.

[177] The reference is clearly to the founding myth of Rome with twin brothers Romolo and Remo being breastfed by a she-wolf.

[178] He will be killed by the House of Mainz seven years after his conversion to Christianity (41.61-62).

Given his role and his function within the plot of the *Furioso*, and his unique identity, Ruggiero is a special character within the poem and, indeed, the whole Italian epic tradition. Ariosto, in fact, deliberately makes him a protagonist of his work, established alongside Orlando as the only two characters introduced by the author in the proem (1.1-4). This choice of protagonist was not structurally obvious – no other continuation of the *Innamorato* composed before the first edition of the *Furioso* ever fully develops the character of Ruggiero and his love story with Bradamante. As Marco Dorigatti notes, Niccolò degli Agostini and Raffaele Valcieco appear minimally interested in Ruggiero, his love of Bradamante or, more generally, Boiardo's plans for their progeny. These poets usually kill off such storylines in the early cantos, likely since they were not related to Ferrara or working under the d'Este patronage and therefore had no specific reason to develop what they would have just perceived as one of many narrative threads left unfinished by Boiardo's interruption.[179]

Ruggiero's importance is owed not only to his function – to found the d'Este dynasty with Bradamante – but also, and perhaps even more so, to his identity – he is the son of a Saracen princess and a Christian Italian knight, who can trace his genealogy back to the Eastern culture of Troy, but has been raised far away from both cultures – and to his role – a Saracen invader who falls in love with a Christian character, converts to Christianity and switches sides.[180]

Ruggiero's function

Given the dynastic duty embedded in his very character, Ruggiero's function within the *Furioso* drives the trajectory of his story, which unfolds all along the work. Indeed, Dorigatti notes that Ariosto makes Ruggiero's story the cornerstone of the entire work, extending the arc of his

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[179] Dorigatti, "Favola," 46-48. On Niccolo degli Agostini and Raffaele Valcieco's continuations of Boiardo's *Innamorato*, see also 47 above.
[180] The combination of these three factors is what makes the cocktail explosive, and it is at the core of my reading.

storyline from the beginning to the end of the *Furioso*: “non dunque motivo accessorio, ma elemento primario, strutturale, l’unico in grado di fornire, tramite il matrimonio finale, la conclusione al pur variegato poema” (2009: 48) (“therefore, not an accessory component, but a primary, structural element, the only one capable of providing, through the final marriage, the conclusion to the poem”).[181] It will only be at the end of the *Furioso* that Ruggiero finally converts and marries Bradamante – and only after a proper process of psychological, moral and social growth that serves to shape a character that Boiardo only sketchily imagined, the same process that will transform an adolescent into a man and a young Saracen knight into a Christian champion.

Ever since Boiardo’s introduction of the character into the Italian chivalric tradition, Ruggiero has been looking for an identity – a new Achilles, eager to demonstrate to the world his own valor as a knight, while at the same time looking for his origins, his personal history. His journey thus resembles a Bildungsroman. Over the course of the *Furioso*, Ruggiero’s character undergoes processes of both familiarization and institutionalization which make him worthy of becoming the d’Este ancestor, worthy psychologically, morally and socially. By overcoming various illusions and deceptions, usually devised by Atlante in a fatherly attempt to delay his would-be son’s departure and entrance into adulthood, Ruggiero matures into the ability to understand and manage his own feelings. He learns to control his sexual passions through the experience acquired on Alcina’s island (8.33-80; 10.35-6), where he also has his sexual initiation (Wiggins 73), and in the episode of Angelica and the orca (10.90-115), when he faces and gets over his first heartbreak, in light of what he has learned. As Peter DeSa Wiggins has highlighted, commenting on the closure of the episode, Ruggiero actually “exhibits the main benefit of his experiences with both enchantresses [Alcina and Longistilla] when he picks himself up after his

[181] Translation is mine.

losses and goes about his business. Instead of remaining infatuated with Angelica, as Orlando has, Ruggiero moves on. No matter how enticing they may be, dreams are insubstantial, and Ruggiero has had his share of imaginary paradises" (91). In metaphoric terms, Ruggiero is definitively freed from his juvenile illusions and from Atlante's paternal oppression when, in the twenty-second canto near the midpoint of the work, Astolfo breaks the spell which keeps him imprisoned (reified as Atlante's palace of illusions) and, in so doing, he is finally able to see Bradamante with a clear mind, to commit to her by promising to convert to Christianity and ask her father for her hand when he can. He has shrugged off his own father figure and can now envision himself as a husband and a father.

At several points in the *Furioso*, Ruggiero faces the moral dilemma of choosing between his duties and his desires, between heart and honor, a dilemma common to many knights in the *Furioso* and to Orlando specifically[182]. He is able to find a temporary compromise, a delaying strategy that he discusses in his letter[183] to Bradamante, written to justify his failure to reach her at the abbey of Vallombrosa for his baptism as agreed (25.86-92). So too when, after the anagnorisis of his relationship to Marfisa at Atlante's tomb, he justifies himself to her for being still unwillingly bound to Agramante instead of killing him as revenge for their father's murder (36.80-81). Ariosto endorses and summarizes Ruggiero's argument to Marfisa in the proem to the thirty-eighth canto:

> Che se l'amante de l'amato deve
> la vita amar più de la propria, o tanto
> (io parlo d'uno amante a cui non lieve
> colpo d'Amor passò più là del manto);
> al piacer tanto più, ch'esso riceve,
> l'onor di quello antepor deve, quanto

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[182] This recurrent dilemma, which almost every knight faces along the poem, has been correctly framed as a critique of a moral system strictly based on chivalric values and as a sign of the crisis resulting from the incompatibility of these values with contemporaneous courts (and that perhaps also with their original environment). See Ascoli, *Ariosto's Bitter Harmony*; and Ascoli, "Faith."

[183] It is noteworthy that Ruggiero, along with Medoro (see 30-36 above), is the only character who actually writes within the poem.

l'onore è di più pregio che la vita,
ch'a tutti altri piaceri è preferita

(38.4: As she who is in love should value more
Than her own life her lover's life (I speak
Of love that strikes a lover to the core),
So pleasure second place must always take
To honour, since of all the joys in store
Which life can offer or that Man can seek,
Honour above all others is revered
And sometimes is to life itself preferred).

Ruggiero's honor, the social status he is trying to build for himself – and for the d'Este family – is more important than anything else, and anyone who loves him, should think the same. He will fight for Agramante, since the Saracen king drafted him and he swore allegiance to him, but, as he promises to Bradamante and Marfisa, he will break the bond with him as soon as he finds the right reason. Ruggiero does not conclusively solve the problem[184] – precisely because Ariosto, as has been suggested elsewhere[185], wants to dwell on it, highlighting the criticality of the ideals at the core of the chivalric code and their moral practicality in his contemporary times. In fact, in the last pages of the work, the dilemma comes back to him in the form of Rodomonte accusing him of betrayal.

Since his appearance in the *Innamorato* and even more so throughout the *Furioso*, Ruggiero also pursues a social identity. First, he discovers and embraces his origins and his destiny through Atlante's prophecies and revelations. Ariosto highlights his commitment to his past and future by having him – and not a voiceover or a painting – make the disclosure to Marfisa and Bradamante at Atlante's tomb (36.70-76). Subsequently, after being definitively freed from Atlante's palace of illusions by Astolfo, Ruggiero starts consistently claiming a position among

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[184] Some scholars have noted a veil of irony in the wording of the prologue, as if Ariosto "wished his narrator's argument to be ineffective"; see Wiggins, *Figures*, 101.
[185] See Ascoli, *Ariosto's Bitter Harmony*; and Ascoli, "Faith."

his peers with a flurry of activity – undoing the unjust law of Pinabello's castle, rescuing Ricciardetto, Malagigi and Viviano, and engaging in many duels (many of which will be delayed). All of this involvement is aimed at establishing a name for himself or, more specifically, claiming his own name, his genealogy, as in the thirtieth canto when he fights Mandricardo for the shield of Hector. As Boiardo had explained in the *Innamorato*[186], the white eagle on the shield was, in fact, Hector's coat of arms and is, therefore, also Ruggiero's[187]. In fighting for the shield, Ruggiero fights to establish his place in Agramante's army and within the aristocratic rank to which he belongs by birth but, more importantly, he also fights for the nobility of the d'Este family origins. Ruggiero here is gathering the pieces of his identity. He defeats Mandricardo, killing him and earning Hector's shield with the imperial insignia (30.44-48) and, later – but only after his conversion – regains Hector's weapons, his sword Balisarda and his horse Frontino, after Orlando found them by Ruggiero's shipwrecked boat near Biserta (44.16-17).

But Ruggiero's lineage is not enough for him to deserve Bradamante as wife and become the progenitor of the d'Este family. He lacks territory and wealth, as Bradamante's parents, Amone and Beatrice, tell her brother Rinaldo, who had engaged her to Ruggiero without their consent. Bradamante's parents had instead promised her hand to Leone – Leone VI, son of Eastern Roman Emperor Constantine and Byzantine Emperor from 866 to 912 – destining her as Empress of the Eastern Roman Empire. It is particularly significant that Bradamante's parents consider the possession of land and wealth a necessary condition to grant their daughter in marriage, as their

[186] Boiardo explains that the myth of Ganymede kidnapped by Jupiter in the form of a white eagle was portrayed on Hector's shield, and that the eagle was later transformed into black by Priam as a sign of mourning after Hector's death. The shield Ruggiero and Madricardo fight for, however, is the original one, the one with the white eagle (*OI* 3.2.6-7).
[187] Boiardo mentions the white eagle associated with Ruggiero for the first time at the beginning of the thirtieth canto of the second book and, as Tissoni Benvenuti notes in her comment to the *Inamoramento de Orlando*, in so doing Boiardo surreptitiously presents the d'Este coat of arms as belonging to the ancestors of Ruggiero (the paternal branch), in contrast with the legend in the *Historia imperiale* attributed to Ricobaldo and translated by Boiardo, in which the choice of the white eagle was attributed to Rinaldo d'Este (who supposedly chose it to stand against the black eagle adopted by Federico Barbarossa).

daughter Bradamante would not have brought in a dowry and Rinaldo would have inherited the family fiefdoms. In strictly genealogical terms, Ruggiero also needs a kingdom to eliminate any doubt of the legitimacy of a male hereditary line in the d'Este succession[188]. So, Ruggiero, who needs to earn a kingdom, decides to go to Greece to kill Leone and conquer his realm[189]. He defeats Leone fighting for the Bulgars, who are at war with him, and they crown him king of Bulgaria. He is later taken prisoner while looking for Leone who, unfortunately for him, frees him, forcing him to face once again the dilemma discussed above: Ruggiero must either take Leone's life or pledge his own to his liberator.

Ruggiero's *cursus honorum* also interestingly parallels the vicissitudes that befall Orlando in the poem. They both face a similar dilemma, falling in love with an enemy and having to decide between their desires and their loyalty to their lords and the chivalric code. They overcome similar challenges, as when they both save a naked woman tied to a rock from a killer whale.[190] And they fight the same knight: Rodomonte, the strongest Saracen knight, whom Orlando only draws against in his madness and whom Ruggiero defeats in the last stanzas of the work. Ruggiero's function,

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[188] It is important to note, as recently highlighted by Eleonora Stoppino, and as we will see in the next chapter, that the character of Bradamante, on the contrary, poses exactly the opposite problem: the problem and the possibility of a female genealogy. For the d'Este family concern regarding genealogical legitimacy see Eleonora Stoppino, *Genealogies of Fiction: Women Warriors and the Dynastic Imagination in the* Orlando Furioso (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012); Jane Fair Bestor, "Marriage and Succession in the House of Este: A Literary Perspective," in Dennis Looney and Denna Shemek, ed., *Phaeton's Children: The Este Court and Its Culture in Early Modern Ferrara* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), 49-85; and Dennis Looney, "Ferrarese Studies: Tracking the Rise and Fall of an Urban Lordship in the Renaissance," in Dennis Looney and Denna Shemek, ed., *Phaeton's Children: The Este Court and Its Culture in Early Modern Ferrara* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), 1-23.

[189] Added only in the third and last edition of the work, the Leone episode is usually read as one of many allusions to Ariosto's historical present and the concerns over the pressure of the Ottoman Empire on Western Europe; see the first chapter of this dissertation. But the episode also seems to have a specific function in Ruggiero's trajectory: to legitimate him as founder of the d'Este family.

[190] Ruggiero saves Angelica in the tenth canto, while, right after him in the eleventh, Orlando saves Olimpia but this time kills the orca. Mandricardo and Gradasso, also saving Lucina from the monster ('orco' in Italian, a masculine version of 'orca,' the word for a killer whale), will perform a similar feat. Like Rodomonte and Ruggiero (see pp. 78, 86-87 in this chapter), they too are pretenders to the place of Orlando as the most prominent knight of the poem.

his prearranged actions, reveals him as an alter ego to Orlando, a stand-in or even replacement for him, but with Italian origins and an identity all his own.

Ruggiero's identity

Ruggiero's identity is unique within the poem. Unlike his sister Marfisa, raised by her Arabian kidnappers, Ruggiero is not only born to parents of different cultures (Christian and Saracen) but, as has been discussed (p. 89), was also raised in a faraway castle by Atlante neither as Christian nor Saracen, estranged from both cultures. He was neither born or raised a Saracen but only becomes one with adulthood, escaping from Atlante's golden cage and being knighted by Agramante. He becomes Saracen without acquiring any knowledge of Islamic culture, in a lay investiture ceremony during which he swears loyalty to Agramante and joins the Saracen army.

In a world divided into two cultures that were envisioned as two different and separate islands, two autonomous and contrasting spheres[191], Ruggiero is the product of neither, not even a rough sum of them like Angelica[192]. Ruggiero's identity does not conform to the enduring concept of "single culture," defined by inner homogeneity and outer delimitation[193], and therefore cannot be easily framed through the old intercultural and multicultural paradigms. In fact, the world he experiences – being around either Christians or Muslims – is never portrayed as a multicultural environment (although it was, in part, and has always been) and his interactions with other characters are never portrayed as intercultural encounters, since by not belonging to either of the two cultures, he is never perceived as 'other'. While Ruggiero genetically embodies both cultures, he does not come from either of them or does he identify with either of them. His identity and his

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[191] I am here referring to the concept of 'single culture' as developed by Johann Gottfried Herder in the late eighteenth century; see especially Johann Gottfried Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* [*Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*] (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967).

[192] Angelica's character is analyzed in the second chapter of this dissertation (36-46).

[193] See Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie*.

perceptual relationship to the world around him instead appear marked by transculturality. Ruggiero appears to possess what would be called today a 'transcultural identity'[194]. He overcomes the cultural borders and in him nothing is really 'other', really 'foreign' anymore. Ruggiero's identity and culture are, in Wolfgang Welsch's terms, "beyond the contraposition of ownness and foreignness" (195) – "beyond both the heterogeneous and the own", as Theodor Adorno once put it.[195] His identity is a hybrid construction developed through discourse, a negotiation of meanings that makes him, again in Welsch's words, a "mongrel" (23), with multiple belongings as homeland.[196]

Ruggiero's peculiar identity also facilitates his conversion which, despite its continuous deferral and the doubts cast on its sincerity[197], appears particularly consistent with the trajectory of the character, and more substantiated than the others in the poem. Announced in the twenty-second canto (34), when Bradamante expressly requires his baptism as a precondition for marriage, Ruggiero's conversion is achieved after many vicissitudes towards the end of the poem, only in the forty-first (55-60), when the shipwrecked Ruggiero lands on a small island inhabited by a hermit. The hermit is the same clergyman who, as discussed above (pp. 64-65), will heal the survivors of the battle of Lampedusa and convert Sobrino just few cantos later (43.190–199). But,

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[194] For the concept of transculturality, see 43n83.

[195] Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, vol. 6 of *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 192.

[196] As Welsch suggests, in a transcultural setting "in culture's internal relations – among its different ways of life – there exists much foreignness as in its external relations with other cultures"; see Welsch, "Transculturality," 198. Similarly, in the *Furioso*, within the Christian side 'there exist much foreignness as in its external relations' with the Saracens. The best example is Gano of Maganza, a dangerous enemy to the Chiaramonte family, Charlemagne, and Christianity, as much as Rodomonte, if not more.

[197] Ruggiero's conversion has been found unconvincing from a religious point of view as it appears motivated only by the fear of losing his life. See Pavlova, "Rodomonte"; Maria Pavlova, "La concezione di cavalleria nei continuatori di Boiardo. Nicolò degli Agostini, Raffaele Valcieco e Ludovico Ariosto," in Cristina Zampese, ed., *Di donne e cavallier. Intorno al primo* Furioso (Milan: Ledizioni, 2018), 197-224. But Ruggiero does not decide to convert while drowning in the forty-first canto (47-49): he has already decided and sworn to convert long before. Here he only regrets not having yet done it and promises to do so as soon as possible if he survives.

even if performed by the same hermit relatively close to one other, the conversions of Sobrino and Ruggiero are very different.

Sobrino's conversion is instantaneous and requires no passage of knowledge between him and the hermit, while Ruggiero's conversion takes time and demands specific training, the acquisition of a specific knowledge[198]. Ariosto, in fact, specifies that Ruggiero

> Imparò poi più ad agio in questo loco
> de nostra fede i gran misterii tutti;
> et alla pura fonte ebbe battesmo
> il dì seguente dal vecchio medesmo
>
> (41.59.5-8The hermit led him higher yet and higher
> In knowledge of our Faith and in pursuit
> Of truth; in the pure water of the spring
> Next day the knight received his christening).

Before being baptized, Ruggiero learns "all the great mysteries" of the Christian religion and his interest is so vivid that, as Ariosto explains in the following stanza, he even discusses what he learned with the hermit over the following days[199]. Ruggiero, the character chosen to become the founder of the d'Este family, cannot simply have "implicit faith": he needs "acquired faith", a proper "explicit faith", complete and articulated[200].

To highlight the exceptionality of the event, Ariosto repeats the concept three cantos later, when Ruggiero is leaving the hermit.

> Ruggier che stato era in esilio tanto,
> né da lo scoglio avea mai mosso il piede,
> tolse licenzia da quel mastro santo
> ch'insegnata gli avea la vera fede
>
> (44.16.1-4: Ruggiero, who had been so long exiled,
> And from the island not a foot had stirred,

[198] The primary reason why the two Saracens convert to Christianity also differs. While Sobrino converts in hopes of being healed by his mortal wounds, Ruggiero has already sworn to convert in many occasions long before meeting the hermit and not for an immediate material gain but, rather, for his love for Bradamante and desire to marry her and consciously enter a new community.
[199] It is important to note that also Marfisa is instructed to Christian religion before being baptized (38.22).
[200] For the concepts of "implicit faith", "acquired faith" and "explicit faith", see 62-63 above.

> Then said farewell to him who had beguiled
> The time by lessons in God's holy Word).

Since Ruggiero has never been educated in Islamic religion and culture, it can moreover be argued that he has never properly been a Saracen. In fact, while still formally a Saracen, dazzled by the desire to perform noble deeds, he sometimes even forgets what side he was fighting for, as when, at the beginning of the twenty-sixth canto (stanzas 3-26), he sides with two Christian knights, Ricciardetto (brother to Bradamante and Rinaldo, whose life he just saved) and Aldighieri (Ricciardetto's cousin) to save the two Christian magicians, Malagigi and Viviano (Aldighieri's brothers), whom the Saracens had taken prisoner and are about to sell to the (Mainz/Maganzesi), their fierce enemies. When the fight begins, Ruggiero and the Christian knights are on one side[201], the Saracens and the (Mainz/Maganzesi) on the other. Here again – as in the initial episode where Rinaldo and Ferraù partner together, analyzed in the third chapter above – 'good Saracens' and 'good Christians' can collaborate and, more importantly, bad Christians and Saracens can find themselves on the same side.

Towards the end of the poem, the text actually suggests Ruggiero was always Christian. In fact, the forty-fourth canto employs an extradiegetic voice to explain that Charlemagne, welcoming Ruggiero into Paris at the end of the war, already knew of Ruggiero's recent conversion to Christianity: "Ben sapea che tornato era alla fede" (44.31.6: Which brought Ruggiero back into the fold). Ruggiero has "*tornato*" (come back) to the Faith. The hero founder of the d'Este dynasty, Ruggiero, was never a Saracen. He was born from a Christian father and a Saracen mother converted to Christianity. He had temporarily lost the right path but is now back where he was

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[201] At the last moment, Marfisa also joins them. She initially challenges them to a duel to measure their worth, but later joins their enterprise, eager to show her own worth.

always supposed to be. Ruggiero's otherness has been completely erased; he has been completely assimilated.

Ruggiero's role

Ruggiero's peculiar identity perfectly fits the role envisioned for him: the invading knight with whom the invaded princess falls madly in love. His role is a recurrent *topos* in chivalric epics – especially the French medieval epics of the previous generations, the tradition to which his mother belonged, but also present in its classic form in the *Furioso*, as with Zerbino and Isabella – but the *Furioso* presents an important twist in the singularly exceptional construction of Ruggiero's character that gives it a totally different meaning. In the medieval epics, the white Saracen princess usually falls in love with a Christian knight belonging to the enemies invading her territory, she betrays her father, and she marries the knight, bringing her lands into Christianity. In the *Furioso*, instead, it is a white Saracen knight who invades a Christian territory, falls in love with a Christian woman, converts to her religion to marries her. By converting to Christianity for love, it is Ruggiero, not Angelica, who inherits the role of the white Saracen princess in the medieval epics, like Bramimonde in the *Chanson de Roland*, the role that Kinoshita identifies as "the site where alterity is both articulated and overcome."[202]

Indeed, Jacqueline de Weever's observations about white princesses in medieval French epics, with some minor modifications, appear particularly fitting to the case of Ruggiero and the *Furioso*:

> The white Saracen stands as interpreter and intermediary between the Franks and the Saracens, between the culture [he] betrays and the culture [he] embraces. Identifying totally with the Frankish ambitions, [he] controls the interpretation of both cultures, one to the other, denigrating [his] own culture through betrayal and conversion. This is one of the tools of colonialism: to publicly cheapen the invad[ing] culture so that its appropriation is inevitable

[202] Kinoshita, *Medieval Boundaries*, 35.

> while privately acknowledging its value. Through the collusion between text and context, imperial control is imposed through the control of writing, the control of the person telling the story. Text and portrait become instruments of establishing control of the desired entities.[203]

With Ruggiero's border-crossing, Christianity gains much more than just a new territory: the invader is conquered, 'alterity' is incorporated and erased. The East is assimilated into the West.

De Weever's later remarks about the role of Aeneas within the *Aeneid* appear to specifically describe Ruggiero's role within the *Furioso*:

> One could go further and claim that one of the foundation texts of Western European literature, the *Aeneid*, is a text based on appropriating the East. Aeneas is an Asiatic prince, appropriated from a Greek text that recognized the difference between Greek and Trojan. Euripides calls the Trojan princesses brought home by Agamemnon 'the girls from Asia' in *Electra* 315-163. Virgil does not develop this aspect of his hero's personality, and the Asiatic prince becomes the founding father of the Roman Empire.[204]

Ruggiero stands exactly at the intersection between borders, being able, thanks to his mixed origin, to embody both sides and converting, in the end of the poem, to perform a sort of Western conquest over the East. His Eastern qualities have been reduced to mere formal membership in the Saracen army and, after his final conversion, the assimilation is complete and the East dissolves, absorbed by the West. In the *Furioso*, as in the *Aeneid*, the East is at the core of Western genealogy, in a *translatio imperi* that conquers and erases at the same time and, in Ariosto's poem, makes Ruggiero a new Aeneas.[205]

Ruggiero's complete assimilation is, in fact, the last event necessary for the Christians to declare victory. Entering Paris after the end of the war with Astolfo, Orlando, Oliviero, Rinaldo

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[203] De Weever, *Sheba's Daughters*, 44-45.
[204] De Weever, *Sheba's Daughters*, 45. It is interesting to note that Aeneas is related to Ruggiero, being Hector's second cousin: Aeneas's father, Anchises, and Hector's father, Priam, were cousins. Aeneas and Ruggiero, therefore, come from the same royal lineage.
[205] As highlighted by David Quint, the *Furioso*, especially over the last twelve cantos, imposes a neo-Virgilian epic conclusion onto the romance structure inherited from the *Innamorato*. See Quint, *Epic*.

and Sobrino, Ruggiero is welcomed by Charlemagne and all the cheering population as one of the winners of the war, one of the "liberatori de l'Impero" (44.33.8: heroes who the Empire freed) as the Parisians' songs name them[206]. But Ruggiero did not fight for the Christian side, in either Biserta or Lipadusa. What is, then, his merit in the eyes of Charlemagne and the people of France? What part does he have in the defeat of the invading Saracen enemy? It is his change of allegiance. He is so strong and valiant that his mere affiliation with the Saracen army would still keep the fate of the war in balance, while his assimilation marks the final defeat of the enemy. Charlemagne is in fact quite relieved by Ruggiero's switching over to the Christian camp and Ariosto makes sure to highlight it:

> Carlo avea di Sicilia avuto avviso
> dei duo re morti e di Sobrino preso,
> e ch'era stato Brandimarte ucciso;
> poi di Ruggiero avea non meno inteso:
> e ne stava col cor lieto e col viso
> d'aver gittato intolerabil peso,
> che gli fu sopra gli omeri sì greve,
> che starà un pezzo pria che si rileve
>
> (44.27: The news had reached King Charles from Sicily:
> Two kings were slain, a prisoner the third;
> He knew that Brandimart had ceased to be
> And with a hero's rites had been interred;
> This weighed upon his heart most heavily.
> About Ruggiero he had also heard
> And he rejoiced, though in the midst of grief:
> It will be long before he knows relief).

Moreover, Ruggiero's assimilation is also the fulfillment of his function and the destiny embedded in his identity. He is the founder of the d'Este family, the depositary of the d'Este code of arms: the white eagle descended from Hector of Troy. When Ruggiero marries Bradamante, he is not an outsider marrying Charlemagne's famous niece but, instead, a king with origins as noble and

[206] Sobrino also enters Paris with the group but was defeated in battle, taken prisoner and only later converted. He therefore has no part in winning the war and enters the city as part of the spoils of war.

antique as Bradamante[207]. Throughout the poem, a strong male genealogy for the d'Este family is established and, to enforce it, Bradamante's agency and martial attitude are also gradually weakened, and she is forced into a more passive and submissive position, as will be discussed in the next chapter.[208]

Ruggiero is the most important cross-border character. In him, the erasure of an aesthetic and moral otherness is complete. He is the strongest Saracen knight[209] but, thanks to his peculiar identity, he is also the easiest enemy to assimilate: the easiest invader to familiarize and, at least illusorily, to 're-conquer.' The *Furioso* typically employs a process of familiarization with its Saracen characters to render these opponents both more directly representative of Italy's and Ferrara's contemporary enemies (in the case of Angelica)[210] and also more easily assimilated (as with Ruggiero). This process does not reveal the absence of a prejudice based on a sense of superiority of Western culture over Eastern civilization, as has been suggested elsewhere[211], but in fact reveals a colonial attitude, negating the others' difference and imposing the superiority of Western stereotypes on the Eastern characters: it is a defensive colonial attitude aimed at healing – even erasing – the wound of a physical and political invasion.

Cross-border characters are a direct consequence of the world portrayed in the *Furioso*: a world where religious affiliation has lost its identifiable moral value, now measured uniformly by

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[207] Their origins can both be traced back to Hector of Troy.

[208] It is particularly interesting to note, on this regard, that a family ruling a small state like the Italian duchy of Ferrara would have been usually forced, looking for important allies, to marry the best offspring (the first male child) to the second or third female child of a more powerful or noble family, creating a conflict of powers within its own family, court, and genealogic line. A classic example of this dynamic is the marriage, in 1528, between Ercole II, first born child of Alfonso I d'Este, and Renée of Valois-Orléans, the youngest daughter of King of France Louis XII, which will be discussed more in depth in the next chapter.

[209] As the narrator explains in the thirtieth canto (stanza 70), with Rodomonte away from the Saracen camp, Ruggiero was considered by Agramante the strongest knight in his army. Later, in the poem's final duel, Ruggiero defeat Rodomonte (46.115-140).

[210] See the second chapter above.

[211] John Donnelly, "The Moslem Enemy in Renaissance Epic: Ariosto, Tasso, and Camoens," *Yale Italian Studies* 1.1 (1977): 162-170, 163.

the courtly manners of all characters. Their existence may signal a world less dichotomous and polarized than it would seem – or at least polarized in a different way from the West-East/ Christian-Muslim dichotomy supposedly represented in the work – but only briefly. The signs of the Counter-Reformation will soon be legible in the works of Ariosto's successors like Bernardo Tasso, returning the religious factor to the center of the value system and, consequently, repolarizing the two sides of the field in the poetic *fictio*.

Chapter 5. Conquering the invader: Bradamante and marriage as a colonial defense

To complete the political strategy aimed at erasing an invading otherness that Ariosto advances with his cross-border characters, specifically Ruggiero, cultural assimilation and political action must be paired with a diplomatic move typical for sixteenth-century Italy, and for the House of d'Este especially: marriage. Indeed, the d'Este marriage strategy was an essential tool to guarantee the survival and prosperity of the duchy of Ferrara, Modena, and Reggio since its very founding. Borso d'Este, the first duke of Ferrara, never married and died childless but his successor, his stepbrother Ercole I – himself married to Eleonora d'Aragona (1473) – married his two eldest daughters, Beatrice and Isabella, to Ludovico Maria Sforza (il Moro) (in 1491) and Francesco II Gonzaga (in 1490), respectively, and arranged the marriage of his firstborn male and successor, Alfonso I, first to Anna Sforza (in 1491), Ludovico's niece, and, ten years later, to Lucrezia Borgia.[212] An aggressive marriage policy aimed to bind the young d'Este dynasty to important foreign and Italian dynasties – dangerous enemies and precious allies – to secure its independence and to expand its influence.[213]

The generation following Ercole I saw the marriage most relevant to this research, as this dissertation has anticipated above: the union Alfonso I organized in 1528 (during the composition of the third edition of the *Furioso*) between his firstborn male and successor, Ercole II, and Renée

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[212] Borso d'Este, duke of Modena and Reggio from 1452, was named duke of Ferrara by Pope Paul II in 1471. Under Ercole, the newly formed duchy started to focus its attention on legitimacy, promoting important efforts in mythological discourse on the family's origins, efforts that would produce the epic poems *Orlando innamorato* and *Orlando furioso*. Alfonso married Anna Sforza in the same ceremony where Ludovico married Alfonso's sister Beatrice, a double wedding orchestrated by Leonardo da Vinci.

[213] On the marriage politics of the d'Este Family, see Trevor Dean, *Land and Power in Medieval Ferrara: The Rule of the Este, 1350-1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Jane Fair Bestor, "Kinship and Marriage in the Politics of an Italian Ruling House: The Este of Ferrara in the Reign of Ercole I (1471-1505)" (dissertation, University of Chicago, 1992); Jane Fair Bestor, "Bastardy and Legitimation in the Formation of a Regional State in Italy: The Estense Succession," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38 (1996): 549-585; Jane Fair Bestor, "Gli illegittimi e beneficiate della casa estense," in Adriano Prosperi, ed., *Il Rinascimento. Situazioni e personaggi* (Ferrara: Corbo 2000), 77-102; Bestor, "Marriage"; and Roberta Iotti, *Gli Estensi. Prima parte: la corte di Ferrara* (Modena: Il Bulino, 1997). On hypergamy as a trait of the d'Este marriage politics, see Chiappini, *Estensi*; Iotti, *Estensi*; and Bestor, "Bastardy."

of Valois-Orléans, the youngest child of the King of France Louis XII and Anne of Brittany.[214] Known in Ferrara as Renée of France, Renée is particularly salient to this inquiry for, beyond being the daughter of one of the major rulers in Europe (France was both an enemy and a possible ally for the d'Este family), she also was a committed Calvinist. Conservatives at the time, in fact, saw her arrival in Ferrara as an invasion: she was a political and religious enemy, a constant reminder of the d'Este dependence on France, and a perpetual threat of Protestant infiltration into the duchy, which itself was a vassal to the Catholic Church.[215] Substantiating their fears, Renée established in Ferrara an intellectual cenacle of heterodox Christians (especially the early followers of John Calvin) – including Ambrogio Cavalli, Giulio della Rovere, Celio Secondo Curione, Antonio Pagano, Lyon Jamet and Clément Marot – and in 1536 she also received a visit from a disguised Calvin himself (who had already published his *Christianae religionis institutio* in Basel) with whom she would maintain regular correspondence up until his death.

Renée perfectly epitomizes the enemy that the duchy was facing during the composition of the *Furioso* and, at the same time, the enemy that the poem portrayed.[216] She is the prime example of an enemy that embodies political and religious concerns while also representing an *other* who is not esthetically or culturally different but similar. As an *other self*, then, Renée reveals herself as very similar to the enemies presented in the *Furioso* and her failed assimilation within the d'Este court aligns her specifically with Angelica: the enemy who is impossible to assimilate and who, therefore, needs to be expunged, as happens with Angelica halfway through the poem.[217] As the

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[214] See 22 and 57n113.
[215] To counter the Calvinist outbreak in the duchy, in fact, the Roman curia sent the rector of the Roman College, the Jesuit Jean Pellettier, to Ferrara in 1551 and later the French king Henry II would send the actual Grand Inquisitor, the Dominican prior Matthieu Ory. The ineffectiveness of these measures and the consequent inability to tame Renata's reform action subsequently moved Ercole II to place his two daughters in a convent and force Renata to formally abjure her faith and participate in Catholic activities.
[216] See the first chapter above.
[217] After Hercules's death in 1559, Renée will in fact abandon Ferrara for her castle in Montargis, France.

previous chapter discussed, however, the *Furioso* also offers a different possible strategy: the successful familiarization and assimilation of the invading enemy, as in the case of Ruggiero. Ruggiero's assimilation through a royal intermarriage requires pairing with a key character who will give birth to the d'Este dynasty: Bradamante, with whom Ruggiero falls in love.

Bradamante

Bradamante is the most important female character of the *Furioso*. She is the most present in the work, in terms of the number of cantos and octaves, and appears in the first and in the last canto.[218] She is the daughter of Amone – duke of Dordogne – and Beatrice – daughter of Naimon, duke of Bavaria.[219] She is therefore Rinaldo's sister and Orlando's cousin but, more importantly, she is a warrior woman, a descendant of classic Amazons as beautiful as they are valiant in battle, like Homer's Penthesilea and Vergil's Camilla.[220] Bradamante, in fact, is very beautiful, as the poem

[218] Bradamante appears in 1.60-64, 1.69-70, 2.30-36, 2.59-76, 3.4ff, 4.2-50, 6.18, 6.33-49, 6.67-69, 10.72, 11.14, 11.19-21, 13.45-80, 22.31-36, 22.42-43, 22.71-75, 22.97-98, 23.2-32, 25.9-20, 25.22-48, 25.83-92, 26.1-2, 30.75-95, 31.1-7, 32.10-110, 33.68-77, 35.31-80, 36.10-84, 37.25-34, 37.86-122, 38.7-8, 38.69-72, 39.12-18, 39.67-72, 40.80-81, 41.60-66, 44.10-14, 44.30-58, 44.60-75, 45.21-40, 45.53-54, 45.65-82, 45.95-102, 46.65-66, 46.73ff and 46.113.

[219] As Eleonora Stoppino has highlighted in her literary genealogy, literary sources for the character take Bradamante through a process of normalization, similar to that undergone by Ruggiero over the course of the *Furioso*. This process transforms her from the daughter of a sultan (in the *Cantari del Danese*) to the wife of the pagan king Marsilio (in the fourteenth-century manuscript *Li fatti di Spagna*), to the illegitimate daughter of Amone (in the *Castello di Teris* from MS Riccardiano 1904), and finally to the legitimate Christian daughter of Amone in the *Furioso*. See Stoppino, *Genealogies*, 29 and 40-43.

[220] On the figure of the warrior woman and the Amazon in Italian literature, see John McLucas, "Amazon, Sorceress, and Queen: Women and War in the Aristocratic Literature of Sixteenth-Century Italy," *Italianist* 8 (1988): 33-55; Gloria Allaire, "The Warrior Woman in Late Medieval Prose Epics," *Italian Culture* 12 (1994): 33-43; Maria Bendinelli Predelli, "La donna guerriera nell'immaginario italiano del tardo medioevo," *Italian Culture* 12 (1994): 13-31; Carla Freccero, "From Amazon to Court Lady: Generic Hybridization in Boccaccio's *Teseida*," *Comparative Literature Studies* 32 (1995): 226-243; and Paolo Di Sacco, "Femmine guerriere. Amazzoni, cavalli e cavalieri da Camilla a Clorinda," *Intersezioni* 16 (1996): 275-289. On Bradamante specifically, see Cesare Segre, *Esperienze ariostesche* (Pisa: Nistri-Lisci, 1966); Lillian Robinson, *Monstrous Regiment: The Lady Knight in Sixteenth-Century Epic* (New York: Garland, 1985); Pamela Benson, *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman: The Challenge of Female Independence in the Literature and Thought of Italy and England* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992); Valeria Finucci, *The Lady Vanishes: Subjectivity and Representation in Castiglione and Ariosto* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); Margaret Tomalin, *The Fortunes of the Warrior Heroine in Italian literature: An Index of Emancipation* (Ravenna: Longo, 1992); Deanna Shemek, *Ladies Errant: Wayward Women and Social Order in Early Modern Italy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Julia Hairston, "Bradamante, 'vergine saggia': Maternity and the Art of Negotiation," *Exemplaria* 12 (2000): 455-486; and Stoppino, *Genealogies*. For the Amazonian theme in Bernardo Tasso, see Walter Stephens, *Giants in Those Days: Folklore, Ancient History and Nationalism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989). On Boccaccio's portrayal of Amazons in *De claris mulieribus*, see Freccero, "From Amazon."

repeatedly announces, but she is also very strong and valiant: "non men che fiera in arme, in viso bella" (32.79: Who was as beautiful in countenance / As she was skilled with horse and sword and lance) writes Ariosto in the episode of the Rocca di Tristano, when she takes off the helm revealing her long hair and femininity.[221] Since her first nameless appearance in the poem, in the first canto, Bradamante is dressed as a knight, and immediately proves her own prowess as a warrior unsaddling Sacripante (1.60-64).

When she is officially presented by the narrator, in the second canto, strength and valor are given as the distinctive elements of her character:

> Io parlo di quella inclita donzella,
> per cui re Sacripante in terra giacque,
> che di questo signor degna sorella,
> del duca Amone e di Beatrice nacque.
> La gran possanza e il molto ardir di quella
> non meno a Carlo e a tutta Francia piacque
> (che più d'un paragon ne vide saldo),
> che'l lodato valor del buon Rinaldo
>
> (2.31: I mean the celebrated Maid; she is
> The one who felled the monarch with her lance:
> Daughter of Aymon and of Beatrice,
> A sister whom Rinaldo proudly flaunts,
> Who for her courage, might and expertise
> By Charlemagne and all the Peers of France
> Is held in no less honour than her brother,
> For they are known to equal each the other).

She is one of Charlemagne's paladins, a defender against the enemy's invasion, and, ultimately, she will reveal herself to be the strongest weapon in the hands of France and Christianity.

Bradamante is the female character chosen to become the ancestor of the d'Este family but only in the third canto is this role officially presented. As discussed in the fourth chapter above,

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[221] Among the many mentions of her beauty are "la bella Bradamante" (4.40; 36.79; 45.107); "Vede Ruggier de la sua dolce e bella / e carissima donna Bradamante" (11.19); "Ruggiero abbraccia la sua donna bella" (22.32); "Veggo (dicea Ruggier) la faccia bella / e le belle fattezze e 'l bel sembiante" (25.20); and "non men che fiera in arme, in viso bella" (32.79).

Boiardo invented Ruggiero to make him the ancestor of the d'Este family but never mentioned how that parentage would happen or who the bride would be. As Dorigatti highlights, Ruggiero had already been presented as the d'Este progenitor by Atlante in the *Innamorato* (2.21.53-60), while Bradamante, in Boiardo's work, remained a character with no history or role in the political or literary ambitions of the poem.[222] Ariosto thus does not introduce Bradamante in the d'Este genealogical project in the opening canto, as he does for Ruggiero, but only in the third. There, Melissa – a character Ariosto invents as the protector of the two founders – reveals Bradamante's destiny to her and, in so doing, reveals the function she will execute within the d'Este dynasty and the poem.[223]

Even if the choice of Bradamante as Ruggiero's betrothed and the progenitor of the d'Este dynasty is not exclusive to Ariosto, entirely Ariosto's responsibility is preparing Bradamante for marriage: the narrative work of transforming a female warrior into a suitable wife and future mother, the founder of a dynasty and, at the same time, a diplomatic tool of colonization, as the following pages will argue. Ariosto needs to turn a warrior woman—always wearing her armor, ready to fight and accomplish heroic deeds (and the object of even women characters' affection) — into a model of woman more compliant with the patriarchal stereotype of femininity: he needs to transform an Amazon into a lady.[224] To accomplish this shift, Ariosto has Bradamante undergo a gradual process of domestication that is unique within the chivalric epic tradition and that in the

[222] Boiardo only mentions that Bradamante fell in love with Ruggiero the first time she saw him (*OI* 3.5.38-39).
[223] See Dorigatti, "Favola," 51-52.
[224] As discussed below, Fiordispina falls in love with Bradamante in the *Innamorato*. Analyzing the literary genealogy of Ariosto's Bradamante, Stoppino highlights the presence of the "the Amazon and the lady"; see Stoppino, *Genealogies*, 85.

same poem is contrasted with Marfisa, another female warrior and Ruggiero's sister, who will remain a classic example of an Amazon from beginning to end.[225]

The two warrior women are, in fact, diametrically opposed (or complementary) – like Love and War – and their names alone offer sufficient proof.[226] The name of Bradamante, so variable in the *Innamorato*, in *Orlando Furioso* is stabilized by Ariosto so that it would clearly contain the word *amante* (lover), while the name of Marfisa, either if interpreted as meaning "fixated on Mars" ("Marte-fissa") or as deriving from the Amazonian queen Marthesia, it is clearly linked with Mars, God of war.[227] Ariosto himself puts them in contrast with a direct reference to their childhood: while Bradamante "né d'orso né di fiero / leone uscí" (2.32: from no cruel bear / Or lion sprung), Marfisa, like her twin brother Ruggiero, was instead suckled by a lioness "de le cui poppe dieci mesi e dieci / ambi nutrir con molto studio feci" (36.62: at my command, / […] / For twenty months I made her suckle you), in the words of Atlante during the anagnorisis of the twins in the thirty-sixth canto (stanzas 58-66).[228]

Ariosto immediately frames Bradamante in a unique role: she is the protagonist of a love quest, a role that chivalric epics usually reserved for male knights and certainly never used for warrior women. Bradamante is looking for Ruggiero – with whom she fell in love at first sight in the *Innamorato* – just as many of the knights are looking for their beloveds (above all, Orlando for

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[225] Like Ruggiero, Marfisa is Boiardo's invention. She is a convincing embodiment of a classic Amazon both in the *Innamorato* and in the *Furioso*. On the difference between Marfisa and Bradamante with respect to the Amazon topos, see Stoppino, *Genealogies*, 58-87.
[226] See J. Chimène Bateman, "Amazonian Knots: Gender, Genre, and Ariosto's Women Warriors," *MLN* 122.1 (2007): 1-23.
[227] The character was already present with the name of Brandiamante in *Inamoramento di Orlando*, Braidamonte in *Rubion d'Anferna*, and Bradiamonte in *Mambriano* di Cieco da Ferrara and in the anonymous cantare *Historia di Bradiamonte*. See Elizabeth Jane Bellamy, "Androgyny and the Epic Quest: The Female Warrior in Ariosto and Spencer," *Postscript* 2.1 (1984): 29-37, 30; and Paolo Baldan, "Marfisa: nascita e carriera di una regina amazzone," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 158 (1981): 518-529. Ariosto himself underlines Marfisa's link with Mars suggesting their aesthetic similarity: "in ciascuna sua parte / fuor che nel viso, assimigliava a Marte" (26.80: "Save for her visage […] / […] / […] a replica of Mars").
[228] See Ita MacCarthy, "Marfisa and Gender Performance in the *Orlando furioso*," *Italian Studies* 60.2 (2005): 178-195, 193-194; Bateman, "Amazonian Knots," 4.

Angelica), but her pursuit is more important for France, Christianity and especially the d'Este dynasty than anyone else's, even Orlando's. Bradamante's quest only seems to reach its conclusion in the twenty-second canto, almost halfway through the poem, when Astolfo frees her and Ruggiero from Atlante's illusory palace and the two lovers can finally be together for the first time and exchange their feelings and promises: Bradamante promises Ruggiero all of herself, Ruggiero promises to convert to Christianity and ask her father for her hand (22.32-34).[229] But the two heroes are not ready yet. In fact, Ruggiero, as discussed above (pp. 94-95), still needs to earn a social status worthy of Bradamante's parents at this point in the poem, while Bradamante still needs to be domesticated: she needs to reenter the norms of gender stereotypes to be suited for marriage and thereby accomplish her function by representing a credible female ancestor for the d'Este dynasty. If she needs and wants to be part of the institutional transaction of marriage, she must conform to the rules imposed by the institution administrating and validating the transaction. A knight cannot marry a knight – for the peace of the patriarchal structure – but can marry a 'lady' who dresses as a knight: still very strong at fighting, but, as we will see, not stronger than her husband.

Beginning in the twenty-third canto, after Bradamante and Ruggiero, only just reunited and betrothed, are again separated by the intertwining of the plot, Ariosto begins the 'normalization' of Bradamante's character.[230] He accomplishes this normalization through processes of

[229] It is actually Bradamante who asks Ruggiero to ask her parents for her hand. She might seem willing to submit completely to the rules that dominate her social environment and give up her independence, but her submission is not total and unconditional: she wants to choose her partner.

[230] En route to the abbey of Vallombrosa to baptize Ruggiero and proceed with their marital project, Ruggiero and Bradamante meet a woman distraught over the death sentence of a young man guilty of having an illicit relationship with the daughter of the Spanish king Marsilio. The knights decide to save the man but, to arrive in time, they must pass by the castle of Count Pinabello (nephew of Gano di Maganza), whom Bradamante recognizes as the knight who stole her horse and made her fall into Merlin's tomb and (2.69-76) and whom she then challenges to a duel. Pinabello escapes and Bradamante pursues him but, after killing this Maganzese (another Christian who is also an enemy), she can no longer find her way to the castle and is separated again from Ruggiero (22.36-98).

demasculinization and femininization, both guided by the patriarchal and misogynistic stereotypes and criteria of the time.

The first important step is to clarify any doubts about Bradamante's feminine aesthetic appearance due to the episode of the *Innamorato* where Fiordispina falls in love with her, after seeing her with armor on but without her helmet (*OI* 3.8.63ff and 3.9.3ff). It is Bradamante's twin brother Ricciardetto who explains the misunderstanding directly to Ruggiero:

> Che voi m'abbiate visto esser potria
> (rispose quel), che non so dove o quando:
> ben vo pel mondo anch'io la parte mia,
> strane aventure or qua or là cercando.
> Forse una mia sorella stata fia,
> che veste l'arme e porta al lato il brando;
> che nacque meco, e tanto mi somiglia,
> che non ne può discerner la famiglia.
>
> Né primo né secondo né ben quarto
> sète di quei ch'errore in ciò preso hanno:
> né 'l padre né i fratelli né chi a un parto
> ci produsse ambi, scernere ci sanno.
> Gli è ver che questo crin raccorcio e sparto
> ch'io porto, come gli altri uomini fanno,
> et il suo lungo e in treccia al capo avvolta,
> ci solea far già differenzia molta:
>
> ma poi ch'un giorno ella ferita fu
> nel capo (lungo saria a dirvi come),
> e per sanarla un servo di Iesù
> a mezza orecchia le tagliò le chiome,
> alcun segno tra noi non restò più
> di differenzia, fuor che 'l sesso e 'l nome.
> Ricciardetto son io, Bradamante ella;
> io fratel di Rinaldo, essa sorella
>
> (25.22-24: 'It may be you have seen me once before,'
> The youth replied, 'when, where, I do not know,
> Since many different regions I explore;
> Seeking adventure, through the world I go.
> You may have seen my sister when she wore
> Full armour and a sword; we two are so
> Alike (for we were born on the same day)
> That who is which, our parents cannot say.

‘You’re not the first; it causes us great mirth
That many folk commit the same mistake.
My father, brothers, she who at one birth
Produced us, the same error often make.
Short hair I have, my sister once no dearth
Of tresses had which for adornment’s sake
She twisted round her head in a long braid;
And this between us some distinction made.

‘But she was wounded in the head one day
(How this occurred would take too long to tell),
And when a holy hermit passed that way,
He cropped her hair so that the wound might heal.
Now which of us is which no one can say,
If we our names and sex do not reveal:
I Ricciardetto, Bradamante she,
Born of the Montalbano family).

When Fiordispina had seen her, “tutta coperta d’arme, eccetto il viso” (25.28: In armor fully clad, save for her face), Bradamante had short hair, and it is therefore understandable that she was mistaken for a man with very delicate features, like her twin brother.

Bradamante, however, not only needs to mirror the aesthetic stereotype of femininity but also to conform to the emotional and behavioral stereotype of femininity as well. In the second half of the poem, in fact, Bradamante’s psychological reactions to the feeling of Love locate aspects of her character that reconcile it to a more traditional stereotype of woman: a woman perceived as more appropriate for the role of wife and mother (and founder of the Este dynasty).

As soon as Bradamante realizes that she has lost Ruggiero again, at the beginning of the twenty-third canto, her heart and mind begin to show the signs (and words) of the lovesickness that will bring her to the brink of suicide.[231] She spends a sleepless night crying and sighing:

Spesso di cor profondo ella sospira,
di pentimento e di dolor compunta,
ch’abbia in lei, più c’amor, potuto l’ira.
– L’ira (dicea) m’ha dal mio amor disgiunta:

[231] See Francesco Ferretti, “La follia dei gelosi: lettura del canto XXXII dell'*Orlando Furioso*,” *Lettere italiane* 1 (2010): 20-62.

almen ci avessi io posta alcuna mira,
poi ch'avea pur la mala impresa assunta,
di saper ritornar donde io veniva;
che ben fui d'occhi e di memoria priva. –

Queste et altre parole ella non tacque,
e molto più ne ragionò col core.
Il vento intanto di sospiri, e l'acque
di pianto facean pioggia di dolore.

(23.7-8: Many a sigh she heaves from her deep heart,
Long sighs of grief, compounded with remorse
That in her soul wrath played a greater part
Than love; her lack of foresight she deplores
Which from Ruggiero keeps her now apart:
'I should have blazed a trail upon my course
To help me to return to whence I came;
My eyes and memory are much to blame.'

Such words as these and many more she spoke;
Her self-reproaches gave her no relief.
Sighs from her bosom like a tempest broke;
Unending tears poured in a rain of grief).

Bradamante begins to show a new aspect of her personality, more fragile and insecure, and the poet highlights and qualifies the novelty using the language of courtly Petrarchism, heralding the transformation of the epic warrior Bradamante into the 'elegiac Bradamante': who, instead of actively seeking the object of her desire, chooses to pine and complain, immobilized by the pains of love and, as will be discussed, by her surrounding social context.[232]

In fact, in the second half of the poem, Bradamante's social condition also changes. The warrior woman, a mobile and active symbol of willfulness throughout the first half of the work, is presented in the second as ever more locked inside closed or protected spaces – in Montalbano (cantos 23-32) and in the Christian camp (cantos 38-46) – and framed in an increasingly passive

[232] It is known that Ariosto, in verse 3 and 4 of stanza 8, refers to Petrarch (*Rime* 189.7-10; 235.9-10; and 301.1-5). See Sapegno, *Orlando Furioso*, 23.8; see also Francesco Ferretti, "Bradamante elegiaca. Costruzione del personaggio e intersezione di generi nell'*Orlando furioso*," *Italianistica* 37.3 (2008): 63-75.

position, paralyzed by lovesickness and bounded by her social context. Bradamante's return to Montalbano in the twenty-third canto represents the materialization of her return to the cage of social norms. Bradamante knows it very well and seems aware of the consequences:

> Come la donna conosciuto ha il loco,
> nel cor s'attrista, e più ch'i' non so dire:
> sarà scoperta, se si ferma un poco,
> né più le sarà lecito a partire;
> se non si parte, l'amoroso foco
> l'arderà sì, che la farà morire:
> non vedrà più Ruggier, né farà cosa
> di quel ch'era ordinato a Vallombrosa
>
> (23.21: When she is truly sure she knows the place,
> The sense of grief redoubles in her heart,
> For she will be discovered if she stays,
> Will no more be permitted to depart.
> Yet she so longs to see Ruggiero's face,
> The fires of love inflict so keen a smart,
> That she will die if what they planned, alas!
> Does not at Vallombrosa come to pass).[233]

During Bradamante's reclusion in Montalbano (30.76-95), her "amorosi tormenti" (30.76: pains of love) further intensify.

Reading the letter Ippalca delivers to her from Ruggiero, who promises to meet her in Montalbano in fifteen or twenty days, Bradamante cries continuously and despairs: "Ohimè! Ruggiero, ohimè!" (30.82: Alas, Ruggiero! ah). When Ricciardetto tells her how Ruggiero and Marfisa saved him as well as Malagigi and Viviano, she is overcome by jealous thoughts and starts doubting Ruggiero's feelings (30.87-89):

> Né picciolo è il sospetto che la preme;
> che se Marfisa è bella, come ha fama,
> e che fin a quel dí sien giti insieme,
> è maraviglia se Ruggier non l'ama

[233] The certainty that, once having arrived in Montalbano, Bradamante would not have been allowed to go to Vallombrosa to marry Ruggiero indicates that she was aware her parents would not have approved the union, most likely due to Ruggiero's inadequate credentials up to this point in the poem.

(30.89: Suspicion in her heart begins to grow,
For if Marfisa is in truth as fair
As her repute, if side by side they go,
And every danger, all adventures share,
Has she not won his heart?).

Lovesickness affects Bradamante so much that it forces her to leave the battlefield, and, with it, her warrior side, which guaranteed her agency and freedom:

Bradamante aspettando che s'appressi
il tempo ch'al disio suo ne vien tardo,
inferma disse agli fratelli ch'era,
e non vòlse con lor venire in schiera

(30.94: But Bradamante, since the time was due
(She hoped) when Fate her longing would fulfil,
Did not go with them, saying she was ill).

Bradamante lies that she is sick to avoid going into battle and, thus, to stay in Montalbano waiting for Ruggiero; but, as the narrator explains, she is actually sick:

E ben lor disse il ver, ch'ella era inferma,
ma non per febbre o corporal dolore:
era il disio che l'alma dentro inferma,
e le fa alterazion patir d'amore

(30.95: Indeed, she spoke the truth, for she was sick,
But not of bodily disease or pain.
Ardent desire had left her spirit weak,
For all her hopes and longings were in vain).

She is sick with the "disio" (desire) for Ruggiero, which leads her to lie and withdraw into a state of passivity more in conformity with the stereotype of femininity of the time.

Due to this lovesickness, Bradamante neglects her duties (defending France and Christianity), as also happens to many of the other paladins of France – chief among them Orlando – eager to conquer their object of desire, Angelica. But while the male knights seem to increase their agency – their freedom from pre-established duties limiting their behavior[234] – with the

[234] This release extends to the point of no longer respecting the rules of nature, as with Orlando.

increase of the disease, for Bradamante, in a diametrically opposite direction, it seems to decrease, to the point of stalemate. This process peaks after Ruggiero fails to arrive in Montalbano on schedule (32.10-49).

Bradamante is powerless and can only complain and assume self-harming attitudes, typical of the female characters in the *Furioso*:

> Il termine passò d'uno, di dui,
> di tre giorni, di sei, d'otto e di venti;
> né vedendo il suo sposo, né di lui
> sentendo nuova, incominciò lamenti
> ch'avrian mosso a pietà nei regni bui
> quelle Furie crinite di serpenti;
> e fece oltraggio a' begli occhi divini,
> al bianco petto, all'aurei crespi crini
>
> (32.17: One day, then two, then three, then six, then eight,
> Elapsed; at last they mounted to a score.
> She, knowing nothing of her bridegroom's fate,
> Was troubled by his absence more and more.
> Her bitter cries would make compassionate
> The snake-haired Furies on the Stygian shore.
> The beauty of her eyes she does not spare,
> Nor yet her snowy breast, her golden hair).

This passage includes an almost verbatim quotation of Olimpia's reaction to her abandonment on a deserted island by Bireno:

> e corre al mar, graffiandosi e gote,
> presaga e certa ormai di sua fortuna.
> Si straccia i crini, e il petto si percuote
>
> (10.22: Beside the sea, now certain of her fate,
> She tears her face, her hair, she beats her breast).

After speaking with a prisoner returning from the Saracen camp who tells her that Ruggiero is engaged to Marfisa, the frustration and helplessness in Bradamante, who now believes that she

lost Ruggiero forever, increase to the point that she even considers killing herself, similar to what Fiordiligi will do after losing her object of desire, Brandimarte.[235]

But Bradamante, as anticipated, is not just any old female character: she has been entrusted a special task by the author and cannot be one of the many heroines of unhappy love whose agency is reduced to the sole action of ending their suffering. The arrival of the "miglior spirto" (32.44.6: better self) – the guardian angel acting in defense of Christianity who is arguably a stand-in for the author defending his genealogical project – in fact distracts Bradamante from her intent, reminding her of the importance of her birth and convincing her to give her life in battle. From the very moment when Bradamante no longer plans to marry Ruggiero, she no longer needs to conform to the social rules and gender stereotypes that doing so entailed.[236] She puts on the armor and leaves Montalbano to go to war.

Confirming the new freedom acquired by Bradamante with respect to gender stereotypes is the immediately following episode of the Rocca di Tristano (32.65-33.65), where she subverts the gender stereotype underlying the rule that allows entry to the castle:

> che 'l cavallier ch'abbia maggior possanza,
> e la donna beltà, sempre ci alloggi;
> e chi vinto riman, vòti la stanza,
> dorma sul prato, o altrove scenda e poggi
>
> (32.94: And thus the cavalier of greatest might,
> The lady who is seen to be most fair,
> Shall turn the others out into the night,
> To sleep upon the grass or anywhere
> They can).[237]

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[235] 43.182-185. Like Dido, Bradamante chooses a tragic death delivered by her sword. Fiordiligi will decide to shut herself in Brandimarte's tomb and die there.
[236] Once the misunderstanding over Ruggiero is solved, Bradamante will have to submit again to the social norms and gender stereotypes ruling her social context, albeit in a different way, as seen below.
[237] On the episode of the Rocca di Tristano, see: Casadei, *Strategia*; Charles Ross, *The Custom of the Castle: From Malory to Macbeth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 58-80; Stoppino, *Genealogies*, 149-173. On recent studies highlighting the relevance of the episode for Renaissance gender distinctions and gender identity, see Finucci, *Lady*; Pamela Benson, "A Defense of the Excellence of Bradamante," *Quaderni d'italianistica* 4 (1983): 135-

Playing with the double nature of her character – lady and warrior, passive and active – Bradamante demonstrates that a knight can be more beautiful than a woman and, moreover, that a woman can have more *possanza* (strength) than a knight. Bradamante has defeated the three knights hosted in the castle and her strength (not her beauty) is the reason she wants to receive accommodation in the fortress, thus sparing the woman who is currently being hosted there (Ullania) from a night out in the open.

Though she could impose her rule by force, Bradamante decides to argue her position from a logical point of view, "con ragion molte e con parlare accorto" (32.107: with much reasoning and with shrewd speaking):[238]

> Ma Bradamante con un saggio aviso,
> che per pietà non vuol che se ne vada,
> rispose: – A me non par che ben deciso,
> né che ben giusto alcun giudicio cada,
> ove prima non s'oda quanto nieghi
> la parte o affermi,e sue ragioni alleghi.
>
> Io ch'a difender questa causa toglio,
> dico: o più bella o men ch'io sia di lei,
> non venni come donna qui, né voglio
> che sian di donna ora i progressi miei.
> Ma chi dirà, se tutta non mi spoglio,
> s'io sono o s'io non son quel ch'è costei?
> E quel che non si sa non si de' dire,
> e tanto men, quando altri n'ha a patire.
>
> Ben son degli altri ancor, c'hanno le chiome
> lunghe, com'io, né donne son per questo.

153; Constance Jordan, "Writing beyond the *Querelle*: Gender and History in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*," in Valeria Finucci, ed., *Renaissance Transactions: Ariosto and Tasso* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 295-315; Hairston, "Bradamante"; and Shemek, *Ladies*, 77-125. The episode, which was added in the 1532 edition, is usually analyzed in tandem with the episode of the "femine omicide," which portrays an Amazonian society. For a comparison of these two episodes and for the connection between Amazonian societies and genealogical concerns in Italian Renaissance literature, specifically in the *Furioso* and in Ferrara, see Bestor, "Marriage"; Looney, "Ferrarese Studies"; and Stoppino, *Genealogies*, 58-87. The rule (32.65-68) was established by Clodione, son of King Fieramonte of France, after Tristan – to whom Clodione had denied lodging in his castle out of jealousy of the woman he kept inside – had defeated Clodione in a duel thereby forcing him to give up his place in the castle for the night (32.83-93). As Pio Rajna highlights, this tale has its main source in *Palamedés*; see Rajna, 498-499.

[238] Translation is mine.

Se come cavallier la stanza, o come
donna acquistata m'abbia, è manifesto:
perché dunque volete darmi nome
di donna, se di maschio è ogni mio gesto?
La legge vostra vuol che ne sian spinte
donne da donne, e non da guerrier vinte.

Poniamo ancor, che, come a voi pur pare,
io donna sia (che non però il concedo),
ma che la mia beltà non fosse pare
a quella di costei; non però credo
che mi vorreste la mercé levare
di mia virtù, se ben di viso io cedo.
Perder per men beltà giusto non parmi
quel c'ho acquistato per virtù con l'armi.

E quando ancor fosse l'usanza tale,
che chi perde in beltà ne dovesse ire,
io ci vorrei restare, o bene o male
che la mia ostinazion dovesse uscire.
Per questo, che contesa diseguale
è tra me e questa donna, vo' inferire
che, contendendo di beltà, può assai
perdere, e meco guadagnar non mai.

E se guadagni e perdite non sono
in tutto pari, ingiusto è ogni partito:
sì ch'a lei per ragion, sì ancor per dono
spezial, non sia l'albergo proibito.
E s'alcuno di dir che non sia buono
e dritto il mio giudizio sarà ardito,
sarò per sostenergli a suo piacere,
che 'l mio sia vero, e falso il suo parere

(32.101-106: But Bradamante's wisdom does not fail;
She reassures the lady in her fear.
She says, 'No judgement rightly can prevail
Unless the arguments well-weighed appear,
And the accused must also testify,
To affirm the evidence, or to deny.

'Now as the counsel for defence, I say:
Whether or not I am more fair than she,
Not as a woman I came here today,
Nor do I want a woman's victory.
Unless I strip quite naked, who can say
If what she is I can be shown to be?

What is not proved should not be used in court,
And even less, if someone it may hurt.

'Consider all the knights who have long hair:
Not all of them are women, you'll allow.
I won my lodging as a cavalier.
That fact was obvious to all. Why now
The name of woman do you make me bear,
If masculine my every deed is? How
Can you be said to keep the law, if men
With women fight? What is your verdict then?

'Let us suppose that, as it seems to you,
I am a woman (which I don't concede)
And that my beauty is unequal to
This lady's beauty: would you have agreed
To take away from me what is my due?
It would be scarcely justice if you did:
To take away from me for lesser charms
What I've already won by force of arms.

'Even supposing such your custom was
And she must leave whose beauty is surpassed,
I should remain in any case, because,
Whatever the result, I should stand fast.
The test between us two defies your laws;
The die against her is already cast,
For if she wins in beauty, I contend
In arms, and must defeat her in the end.

'There must be perfect parity between
Competitors; if not, it should be clear
The judgement is invalid; it is seen
That as of right or as a gift to her
A lodging must be granted, and herein
She must remain; if any challenger
His verdict against mine would like to test,
I am prepared to show that mine is best.').

Bradamante develops her argument with an abundance of hypothetical statements and with formulas and technical terms typical of legal language, showing an eloquence unknown to her character in the *Innamorato* and in the first half of the *Furioso*, which will instead become a distinctive feature of her character. Exemplifying this eloquence are her request to Charlemagne

for a marriage by duel (44.68-70), analyzed below, and the promise of eternal love to Ruggiero towards the end of the work.[239]

Bradamante is changing, becoming a more complex character who can embody the qualities and virtues of both sexes, as Elissa Weaver has highlighted: the ideal of the chivalrous hero and the perfect Renaissance lady.[240] It is part of the transformation to prepare Bradamante to be the ideal wife and progenitor and – more importantly for this analysis – the final tool needed to assimilate the invading enemy and, as seen below, also conquer it. As Weaver suggests:

> Con Bradamante Ariosto crea la consorte ideale del principe, la moglie perfettamente in grado di governare in assenza del marito. Bradamante infatti, secondo la profezia, sette anni più tardi vendicherà la morte del marito e assicurerà il futuro della loro dinastia. Sembra chiaro che Ariosto prefiguri, per mezzo di questa "antenata", il valore delle donne delle famiglie Este e Gonzaga, donne che, come Isabella d'Este, sapranno governare in assenza del marito.
>
> (With Bradamante Ariosto creates the ideal partner of the prince, the wife perfectly capable of governing while her husband is absent. Bradamante in fact, according to the prophecy, seven years later will avenge her husband's death and ensure the future of their dynasty. It seems clear that Ariosto foreshadows, through this "ancestor", the virtue of the women of the Este and Gonzaga families: women like

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[239] See 45.61-66: "Ruggier qual sempre fui tal'esser voglio / fin'alla morte: e più: se più si puote, / o siami Amor benigno: o m'usi orgoglio, / o me Fortuna in alto: o in basso ruote, / immobil son di vera fede scoglio / che d'ogn'intorno il vento, e il mar percuote, / né giamai per bonaccia né per verno / luogo mutai: ne muterò in eterno. // Scarpello si vedrà di piombo o lima / formare in varie imagini Diamante, / prima che colpo di Fortuna: o prima / ch'ira d'Amor rompa il mio cor costante, / e si vedrà tornar verso la cima / de l'alpe il fiume turbido e sonante, / che per nuovi accidenti: o buoni o rei / faccino altro viaggio i pensier miei. // A voi Ruggier tutto il dominio ho dato / di me: che forse e più ch'altri non crede, / so ben ch'a nuovo principe giurato / non fu di questa mai la maggior fede, / so che né al mondo il più sicuro stato / di questo: Re ne Imperator possiede, / non vi bisogna far fossa né torre / per dubbio ch'altri a voi lo venga a torre. // Che senza ch'assoldiate altra persona / non verrà assalto a cui non si resista: / non è ricchezza ad espugnarmi buona: / né sì vil prezzo un cor gentile acquista, / né nobiltà né altezza di corona / ch'al sciocco volgo abbagliar suol la vista / non beltà ch'in lieve animo può assai / vedrò che più di voi mi piaccia mai. // Non avete a temer, ch'in forma nuova / intagliare il mio cor mai più si possa, / sì l'imagine vostra si ritrova / sculpita in lui, ch'esser non puo rimossa, / che'l cor non ho di cera e fatto prova, / che gli diè cento non ch'una percossa / Amor: prima che scalia ne levasse / quando all'imagin vostra lo ritrasse. // Avorio e gemma, et ogni pietra dura / che meglio da l'intaglio si difende / romper si può, ma non ch'altra figura / prenda: che quella ch'una volta prende, / non è il mio cor diverso alla natura / del marmo: o d'altro ch'al ferro contende: / prima esser può che tutto Amor lo spezze, / che lo possa sculpir d'altre bellezze."

[240] In the *Furioso* Bradamante is certainly the female character who shows the most psychological depth. See Elissa Weaver, "Filoginia e misoginia," in Annalisa Izzo, *Lessico critico dell'*Orlando Furioso (Rome: Carocci, 2016), 81-97, 92-93.

> Isabella d’Este, who will be able to govern while her husband is absent)[241].

Bradamante appears to embody (and succeed in managing) a double nature from different points of view. She is a daughter and a wife, embodying the classic conflict between loyalty to the father and loyalty to the husband, and, at the same time, a warrior and a lady, therefore also embodying the negotiation between an active role and passive beauty.

Before finding Ruggiero and clearing up the misunderstanding regarding his relationship with Marfisa at Atlante’s tomb in the thirty-sixth canto (36.59-76), Bradamante has time to show off her warrior prowess by defeating Rodomonte one canto prior (35.33-51) – she, and Ruggiero, are the only knights able to do it.[242] She also has the opportunity to display her chivalrous qualities in her clash with the three Saracen knights in the thirty-fifth canto (35.67-80), whom Bradamante puts back on their horses after having unsaddled them. She will preserve her warrior quality until the very end of the poem – to take part in the defense of Paris and, more importantly, fight for her own freedom – but with her return to the Christian camp, she will partially lose her agency, the active ability to decide for herself. To fulfill her destiny, as has been anticipated, she must submit to the gender stereotypes ruling the social context and the social norms by which she wants (and needs) her love for Ruggiero to be recognized. But, as we will see, she will submit only through her ability to negotiate between different fidelities, duties and desires, and between a passive and

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[241] Weaver, “Filoginia,” 94; my translation.

[242] As discussed above, Rodomonte is the strongest Saracen knight. It is interesting to note, as Ascoli has, that after his defeat by Bradamante Rodomonte remains without the snake armor he had inherited from his ancestor Nembrotte, which made him invulnerable. When he fights Ruggiero at the end of the poem, he wears much worse armor, as the narrator reminds us (46.119-120), thus facilitating Ruggiero's victory. See Albert Russell Ascoli, “Canto XXXV,” in Annalisa Izzo and Franco Tomasi, ed., *Lettura dell’ “Orlando furioso”* (Florence: SISMEL, 2016-2019), 2:313-337, 2:336. And as we have seen, not even Orlando can defeat Rodomonte.

an active role, an ability afforded her by her double nature and the qualities (logic and eloquence) displayed in the second half of the poem.[243]

The last act Bradamante performs as a free woman before separating again from Ruggiero and returning to the Christian camp with Marfisa is to defeat the tyrant Marganorre and overturn the misogynist law he imposed on his territories.[244] Women, who under Marganorre were exiled, isolated, and humiliated, will henceforth be respected and revered as the custodians of power: "In somma quel ch'altrove è del marito, / che sia qui de la moglie è statuito" (37.115: To sum the matter up, just as elsewhere / Husbands are masters, here the wives shall be / By right invested with authority). While Ariosto seems to allude to the important women of the d'Este family and to the importance of women within the d'Este genealogy, Bradamante seems to be trying to lay the foundations for her future role as regent, claiming a right that – going back to her social environment – she feels is slipping through her hands.[245] She will indeed reign over her territories alone because, as readers already know, seven years after their marriage, Ruggiero will be killed and it will be precisely she who avenges his death.

When Bradamante returns for the last time to the Christian camp, she is immediately framed within a family context – her brothers are the first to welcome her (38.8) – which should bring her comfort and protection, but which turns out to be symbol of a world based on more rigid patriarchal rules and gender stereotypes. She will still be allowed to fight and drive the Saracens out of France, the heart of Christianity, and will thus be allowed to prove her worth as progenitor of the d'Este family (39.10-15), but she will no longer have complete mastery of her own destiny

[243] For Julia Hairston, Bradamante's greatest quality is exactly her ability to negotiate between the different values and demands imposed upon her; see Hairston, "Bradamante." Eleonora Stoppino defines Bradamante a "champion of negotiation"; see Stoppino, *Genealogies*, 172.
[244] See 37.85-122. Marganorre had exiled all women and forbidden their husbands and children from visiting them. He then established that every woman who passed through his territories should be beaten and stripped bare or killed if escorted by a knight (37.38-40 and 37.81-84).
[245] On the importance Ariosto attributes to women in the d'Este genealogy, see specifically Stoppino, *Genealogies*.

and of herself.[246] In fact, as soon as she arrives, she discovers that she has been betrothed by her parents, with Charlemagne's blessing, to Leone, son of the Eastern Roman emperor Constantino.[247]

Ariosto highlights Bradamante's status as a family possession by setting the promise of marriage made by Amone to Costantino (44.12-13) within the one made by Rinaldo to Ruggiero, in which Bradamante's brother betroths her to the newly converted Saracen-born Ruggiero (44.11 and 44.14):

> E seguitando il suo parlar piú inante,
> fa il santo vecchio sí, che persuade
> che Rinaldo a Ruggier dia Bradamante,
> ben che pregar né l'un né l'altro accade.
> Loda Olivier col principe d'Anglante,
> che far si debba questa affinitade;
> il che speran ch'approvi Amone e Carlo,
> e debba tutta Francia commendarlo.
>
> Cosí dicean; ma non sapean ch'Amone,
> con voluntà del figlio di Pipino,
> n'avea dato in quei giorni intenzïone
> all'imperator greco Costantino,
> che gliele domandava per Leone
> suo figlio e successor nel gran domíno.
> Se n'era, pel valor che n'avea inteso,
> senza vederla, il giovinetto acceso.
>
> Riposto gli avea Amon, che da sé solo
> non era per concludere altramente,
> né pria che ne parlasse col figliuolo
> Rinaldo, da la corte allora absente;
> il qual credea che vi verrebbe a volo,
> e che di grazia avria sí gran parente:
> pur, per molto rispetto che gli avea,
> risolver senza lui non si volea.
>
> Or Rinaldo lontan dal padre, quella
> pratica imperïal tutta ignorando,

[246] She was never completely freed from the rules of her social environment as demonstrated by her request to Ruggiero to ask her parents for her hand instead of marrying him without her family's consent.
[247] Probably Constantino IV Copronimo, emperor of Constantinople (741-775), and his son Leone IV (775-780).

quivi a Ruggier promette la sorella
di suo parere, e di parer d'Orlando
e degli altri ch'avea seco alla cella,
ma sopra tutti l'eremita instando:
e crede veramente che piacere
debba ad Amon quel parentado avere.

(44.11-14: And he pursues the matter with such zest
That he persuades the son of Aymon (though
No call was there to plead or to insist)
His sister on Ruggiero to bestow.
The Count and Oliver you will have guessed)
Delight at this proposed arrangement show,
Hoping the Emperor and all of France,"
"As well as Aymon, will approve their plans.

They did not know that Aymon had agreed
(And Charlemagne had given his consent)
His daughter Bradamante should be wed
To Leon, the young prince of the Levant;
His father Constantine he would succeed,
Who on his son's behalf to France had sent.
The youth the warrior-maid had never seen,
But with her valour long in love had been.

Duke Aymon had replied that he alone
The marriage contract would not sign before
He had discussed the matter with his son
Rinaldo, now by reason of the war
Away from court and Montalbano gone.
He would be glad (of this, the Duke felt sure)
To have so great a brother, but he meant
To wait (out of respect) for his consent.

But now, of these arrangements unaware
And from his father many miles away,
Rinaldo gives his sister to Ruggier
On his own word and on Orlando's say,
Supported by the others present there.
(The hermit's words exert the strongest sway.)
He truly thinks in all sincerity
His father Aymon will delighted be).

Once back inside the Christian camp and her family environment, Bradamante suddenly returns to a passive and submissive character, respectful of gender stereotypes and associated behaviors:

Sta Bradamante tacita, né al detto
de la madre s'arrisca a contradire;
che l'ha in tal riverenzia e in tal rispetto,
che non potria pensar non l'ubbidire.
Da l'altra parte terria gran difetto,
se quel che non vuol far, volesse dire.
Non vuol, perché non può; che 'l poco e 'l molto
poter di sé disporre Amor le ha tolto.

Né negar, né mostrarsene contenta
s'ardisce; e sol sospira, e non risponde:
poi quando è in luogo ch'altri non la senta,
versan lacrime gli occhi a guise d'onde;
e parte del dolor che la tormenta,
sentir fa al petto et alle chiome bionde,
che l'un percuote, e l'altro straccia e frange;
e così parla, e così seco piange

(44.39-40: "The lovely Maid stands mute; her mother's words
She would not ever dare to contradict,
Such is the reverence she feels towards
The one who gave her birth, such the respect.
Yet with her honour it but ill accords
To trifle with the truth – a grave defect.
She cannot now unwill her will, which Love,
In small things and in great, has robbed her of.

She did not dare say 'No', nor give consent;
Only one answer could she give – a sigh.
Where nobody could overhear she went
And floods of bitter tears began to cry.
She made her bosom share the punishment
And tore her golden tresses all awry.
Her grief and her despair were piteous
As, weeping, to herself she murmured thus).

Bradamante seems stalled again, blocked by the social network in which she is inserted and by the feeling of love that possesses her: "Figlia d'Amone e di Beatrice sono, / e son, misera me! serva d'Amore" (44.44: I am Daughter of Amon and Beatrice, / and, miserable me! I am servant of Love).[248]

[248] Translation is mine. It is perhaps a coincidence, but the incipit of stanza 44 of canto 44 seems to be an important place for the canto itself.

Just as when she was cooped up in Montalbano, she cries and despairs (44.41-47) and once again the only possible option seems to be death: “Ma vo’ prima morir, che mai sia vero, / ch’io pigli altro marito, che Ruggiero” (44.45: But I would rather die, and this I swear, / Than take another husband than Ruggier). This time, however, mindful of the events at the Rocca di Tristano, Bradamante manages to find a solution to the problem herself without needing any external suggestions from the Miglior Spirito (the author), demonstrating the maturation of her character. As Ascoli notes, Bradamante’s inner battle between competing fidelities – loyalty to her family and social context and loyalty to her lover – is closely linked to the twenty-first canto, where the theme of faith is discussed at length, and the solution devised by Bradamante constitutes “a tactical idealism, a fidelity prepared to compromise itself in order to maintain itself, and to negotiate its way between personal and political relationships according to the requirements of the situation.”[249] Bradamante's need to submit to her family’s decisions is closely linked to her gender, and she manages, just as at the Rocca di Tristano, to overturn the point of view by playing the gender stereotype to her favor through the negotiation of the two aspects of her character: if she is capable and allowed to fight by Charlemagne as men do, she asks Charlemagne to be treated as a man – to be able to own herself and defend her possessions by duel.

Bradamante goes to Charlemagne, the man in whose army she has been fighting and requests to be married only to a man able to defeat her in duel:

> – Il don ch’io bramo da l’Altezza vostra,
> è che non lasci mai marito darme
> (disse la damigella), se non mostra
> che più di me sia valoroso in arme.
> Con qualunque mi vuol, prima o con giostra

[249] Ascoli 1999, p. 167. As discussed in the previous chapter, Ruggiero is also caught between conflicting loyalties: the commitment to fight for Agramante (his vassalage relationship to the Saracen king) and his love for Bradamante or, in other words, his role as knight and his role as lover and founder of a dynasty. The discovery of his Christian origins and of the killing of his father by Troiano (Agramante’s father) will help Ruggiero easily solve the dilemma around choosing to convert and marry Bradamante and abandon Agramante’s side.

o con la spada in mano ho da provarme.
Il primo che mi vinca, mi guadagni:
chi vinto sia, con altra s'accompagni.–

(44.70: The gift I ask of you, Your Majesty,'
The Maid resumed, 'is that you will permit
No man (whate'er his rank) to marry me
Unless in arms he proves that he is fit.
Whoever woos me must first show that he
With lance or sword can bring me to submit.
Who conquers me shall win my hand besides,
And those who lose must marry other brides).[250]

With her request to Charlemagne, Bradamante once again demonstrates her ability and will (or need) to remain within the social schema that contains her.[251] In fact, she does not claim the right to betroth herself to whomever she wishes – Ruggiero – contesting the primacy of her family over her, but, with a skillful legal loophole, she shifts the right to betroth her (thus the ownership of her) from her parents to her king and then asks his permission to fight for her own freedom.[252] Bradamante's choice here differs from and certainly complicates the position taken earlier by Marfisa, who had instead affirmed her independence and defended it with weapons in a clash with Mandricardo:[253] "Io sua non son, ne' d'altri son che mia / dunque me tolga a me chi mi desia"

[250] As Rajna first indicated in *Le fonti dell'*Orlando Furioso, this episode, added only in the final edition of the Furioso (1532), has its main literary model in the cantare *Historia di Bradiamonte*. For an analysis of the relationship between the episode of the *Furioso* and its literary models and also for an overview of the theme of the marriage by duel, see Stoppino, *Genealogies*, especially 18-57. It is particularly interesting that the narrator, right within Bradamante's request of a marriage by duel to Charlemagne, defines the warrior woman as a "damigella" (lady/damsel). It seems Ariosto is trying to highlight Bradamante's double nature (knight and lady) at the precise moment when she is taking advantage of it.
[251] She had previously demonstrated this same will and ability by asking Ruggiero to be baptized and then himself ask her parents for her hand.
[252] Bradamante had considered shifting the right to betroth her from her parents to her older brother, Rinaldo, who had already engaged her to Ruggiero (44.46-47) but the action would have had no legal justification.
[253] Having seen Marfisa without armor and in women's dress, Mandricardo decided to defeat her so as to donate her to Rodomonte as compensation for the theft of Doralice.

(26.79: I belong / To no one but myself; and so you see, / Who wants me must do battle first with me).[254]

Bradamante's submission to Charlemagne's power guarantees her the ability to decide for herself and, thus, her independence. Similarly, the small duchy of Ferrara, threatened by the big European powers, had to submit to someone even stronger than its enemies in order to maintain its independence: the only choices left on the horizon of Este diplomacy were who to submit to and how. The conflict Bradamante faces recalls Ghismonda's conflict in the first novella of the fourth day of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, which, as anticipated in the second chapter of this dissertation, is an intertext also for Angelica and Medoro's story.[255] Like Angelica and Ghismonda, Bradamante prefers a noble heart over wealth and noble titles and, like them, she wishes to choose her partner for herself.[256] Unlike Ghismonda and Angelica, however, she cannot free herself from parental and social control and cannot leave the story (by dying or disappearing from the plotline), because her character is fundamental to the fulfillment of the story itself: she has an institutional role to play and therefore cannot be abstracted from her social context. For the same reason, as explained in the fourth chapter, Ruggiero is forced to earn the adequate social position conferred by wealth and a noble title.[257]

The last step Bradamante needs to take in order to become a wife and mother and, therefore, an adequate progenitor of the d'Este family is submit to her husband. In fact, Bradamante's request to Charles for the right to betroth herself only to a man able to defeat her (to subjugate her), instead

[254] The classic warrior woman Marfisa is the perfect counterpoint to highlight Bradamante's uniqueness within the category of female warriors and, moreover, the unique process of transformation she undergoes in the second half of the poem, cantos in which they are often juxtaposed by the author.
[255] See 41n80.
[256] In Ariosto's description: "Degna d'eterna laude è Bradamante, / che non amò tesor, non amò impero, / ma la virtú, ma l'animo prestante, / ma l'alta gentilezza di Ruggiero; / e meritò che ben le fosse amante / un così valoroso cavalliero, / e per piacere a lei facesse cose / nei secoli avenir miracolose" (26.2). Ruggiero has a noble lineage, but no title attached to it.
[257] See 94-95 above.

of the more direct permission to marry Ruggiero, demonstrates her embrace of the social role established for women and especially wives at the time, a submissive role to their husbands. To portray a plausible husband and a credible couple, the text needs an ancestor able to tame his wife.[258] But Charlemagne introduces a substantial difference in the announcement he publishes throughout his empire:

> Questa condizïon contiene il bando:
> chi la figlia d'Amon per moglie vuole,
> star con lei debba a paragon del brando
> da l'apparire al tramontar del sole;
> e fin a questo termine durando,
> e non sia vinto, senz'altre parole
> la donna da lui vinta esser s'intenda,
> né possa ella negar che non lo prenda
>
> (45.23: And these were the conditions, word for word:
> Whoever Aymon's daughter would espouse
> Must face her first, fighting with lance or sword
> From morning until eve without a pause;
> If he should last so long, as his reward
> He'll win the Maid, and she will not refuse,
> If he has not been vanquished in this strife,
> To let him take her as his wedded wife).

Conquering Bradamante does not require defeating her (to subjugate her) but only resisting her, not being defeated by her. This difference, the possibility of a tie, is very significant because it seems to suggest Charlemagne's endorsement of a model of family based on an equal relationship between partners, and, more importantly for this research, it allows Bradamante not to lose, not to be officially subjected to a man to whom she is forced to unite herself.[259] Similarly, also the small

[258] Particularly interesting, in this regard, are Stoppino's arguments about the double nature of the Amazon. See Stoppino, *Genealogies*, 79: "On the one hand, the Amazon represents the threat of female rule and self-sufficiency; on the other, […] she becomes the object of a fantasy of generative superiority: the man who can subjugate the Amazon and make her his bride is clearly superior to the other men."
[259] It is clear to me that the modification introduced by Charlemagne is an obvious marker of the author's intentions. Bradamante could have asked for a man who able to resist her (and not defeat her) or Charlemagne could have consented to Bradamante's request, but Ariosto wants to highlight the difference between the two options.

d'Este duchy, implementing its own matrimonial diplomatic strategy, hoped and aimed to have an equal relationship with the big European powers with whom it was forced to unite.

Before the duel with Ruggiero in disguise as Leone, Bradamante discovers that Ruggiero has left Paris and yet again displays behavior typically associated with her gender: she sighs, beats her chest, speaks to her absent lover in an elegiac tone and weeps continually (45.28-40). When the duel finally takes place, it ends in a draw (45.72-82), even if the author takes care to communicate that while Ruggiero, out of love for Bradamante, uses blunt weapons (45.68) and tries not to hit her (or if he strikes, not to seriously injure) (45.76; 45.77). Bradamante, on the other hand, believes she is fighting against Leone so combats fiercely and sharpens her weapons with the intent to kill the enemy-pretender (45.70). Though never before defeated, either in open field or in single combat with any knight, and victorious over both Marfisa and Rodomonte, the strongest Saracen enemies along with Ruggiero, Bradamante cannot prevail over Ruggiero. But, as we know, she need not defeat her last enemy, as she has already conquered his heart. In fact, when Ruggiero comes to duel with Bradamante he has already been completely assimilated: he has already converted to Christianity and has already submitted to Charlemagne's power.

When the marriage between Bradamante and Ruggiero takes place – delayed throughout the work to serve as the announced conclusion – it is mentioned in the space of a single verse (46.73.1) at the beginning of the description of the wedding preparations, organized by Charlemagne and not by Bradamante's parents (46.73-75), and before a long description of the bed and the nuptial suite flown in for the event from Constantinople by Melissa (46.76-97)[260]. The marriage does not seem to be important in itself but seems to be necessary only as the gear that will make the mechanism, already set in motion by the events, achieve the purpose of the text.

[260] The pavilion was woven by Cassandra for Hector and depicted the life and exploits of Ippolito d'Este.

Indeed, their marriage completes the encomiastic and genealogical intent of the work and, at the same time, allows for the restoration of normality: not just the end of the war but also the Christians' victory in it.[261]

In fact, Charlemagne's wedding preparations seem more like celebrations for the victory of a war than for a simple wedding:

> Fansi le nozze splendide e reali,
> convenïenti a chi cura ne piglia:
> Carlo ne piglia cura, e le fa quali
> farebbe, maritando una sua figlia.
> I meriti della donna erano tali,
> oltre a quelli di tutta la sua famiglia,
> ch'a quel signor non parria uscir del segno,
> se spendesse per lei mezzo il suo regno.
>
> Libera corte fa bandire intorno,
> ove sicuro ognun possa venire;
> e campo franco sin al nono giorno
> concede a chi contese ha da partire.
> Fe' alla campagna l'apparato adorno
> di rami intesti e di bei fiori ordire,
> d'oro e di seta poi, tanto giocondo,
> che 'l più bel luogo mai non fu nel mondo.
>
> Dentro a Parigi non seriano state
> l'innumerabil genti peregrine,
> povare e ricche e d'ogni qualitate,
> che v'eran, greche, barbare e latine.
> Tanti signori, e imbascierie mandate
> di tutto 'l mondo, non aveano fine:
> erano in padiglion, tende e Frascati
> con gran commodità tutti alloggiati
>
> (46.73-75: A wedding, splendid and spectacular,
> Is now arranged, and a right royal one.
> Charles sees to the arrangements with such care,
> It might have been a daughter of his own
> Who was to wed; but such her merits are
> And such the worth of every Montalban,

[261] As Stoppino suggests, "Bradamante's choice […] is not only a choice for love; Bradamante is also choosing to found a new dynasty, to fulfill the end of the poem"; see Stoppino, *Genealogies*, 115.

It would not seem excessive if he spent
Half of his kingdom's wealth for this event.

The heralds now proclaim an open court
Where all may come and safely take their ease,
And freedom of the lists, where every sort
Of quarrel may be settled, for nine days.
Pavilions rise, and bowers, for the sport,
Embellished by green boughs and flowering sprays,
With draperies of silk and cloth of gold –
A scene of joy and gladsome to behold.

Paris alone could not have housed so great
A crowd of visitors from foreign lands:
Poor, rich, of high degree, of low estate,
Greeks, Romans, lesser breeds in lawless bands
Ambassadors and lords and heads of state,
Whom every country to the wedding sends,
Are each in a pavilion, booth or tent
In comfort lodged and catered for, content).

Libera corte (open court) and *campo franco* (freedom of the lists): the nuptial event seems to return to the joust organized by Charlemagne at the beginning of Boiardo's *Innamorato*, when Saracens could also enter the court.[262] The wound caused by the invasion has been healed. The invasion has been rejected and the enemy has been eliminated: either killed – as with Mandricardo, Gradasso, Agramante and Rodomonte – or assimilated, as with Ruggiero, the only Saracen enemy never defeated by a Christian.[263]

What great merits of Bradamante's does the narrator mention to justify the celebrations organized by Charlemagne?[264] Bradamante's great merit is to conquer and marry Ruggiero. By

[262] *Libera corte* indicates the possibility for everyone from outside Carlo's kingdom to enter unharmed the court, while *campo franco* denotes the possibility to freely engage in individual duels and therefore the possibility to enter the court armed.
[263] Marfisa is also assimilated – though in a different way (see note 267 below) – but she is not an enemy: she never fights for Agramante as she is not part of his army, and she is not invading. She is an independent knight, unengaged from the two sides. Interestingly – probably because she does not have to marry anyone – she is only partially familiarized, subjugated to Charlemagne's power but not his gender stereotypes.
[264] It is important to note that the verses "I meriti della donna erano tali, / oltre a quelli di tutta la sua famiglia" (46.73.5-6: but such her merits are / And such the worth of every Montalban) can be interpreted in two different ways. The word *oltre* can be interpreted as 'in addition to' – Barbara Reynolds interpretation (1401) – or as 'more' – my

conquering him (the strongest enemy – who will, in turn, eliminate first Mandricardo and then Rodomonte) she definitively defeats the invading enemy. By marrying him, after actively seeking him and mediating with the social context, she is the main instrument of a colonial act that brings the territories just conquered by him under the influence of Charlemagne. Bradamante, in fact, by marrying Ruggiero, does not assimilate a simple invader but in fact the king of Bulgaria – whom the narrator describes as a potential future enemy of Constantine and the Eastern Roman Empire (46.69-72) – and territories previously located outside Charlemagne's sphere of influence. Furthermore, as readers know from the beginning of the work, Bradamante will remain the only ruler of those territories, since Ruggiero will be killed only seven years after their marriage.

Bradamante's uniqueness stands out especially when compared to Lidia, the daughter of the king of Lydia who tells her story to Astolfo at the entrance to Hell.[265] The story of Lidia and Alceste – which clearly suggests marriage as a political-military strategy to deal with an enemy invasion – is a clear textual counterpoint to the story of Bradamante and Ruggiero.[266] The two stories do share a similar plotline – a father who will not grant his daughter to a suitor without a kingdom and the suitor forced to conquer a kingdom in order to earn his beloved – but two very different female protagonists. Bradamante is not, in fact, like Lidia (or the many Saracen princesses who fall in love with Christian knights), who is a metaphoric gift exchanged to embody the greater act of submission, a stand-in for the realm of her father and, therefore, for a territory that needs to be conquered – at once, object of erotic and colonial desire – but a colonizing agent: she actively

interpretation – thus indicating Bradamante as even more deserving than her family and, therefore, also more than Rinaldo, who fought honorably to defend France from the Saracen invasion as much as she did.

[265] 34.7-43. For an in-depth analysis of the episode and its sources, see Stoppino, *Genealogies*, 88-115.

[266] In Italian the name of the character, Lidia, coincides with the name of the country, Lydia. The episode is, in fact, located immediately after the invective against the invaders of the Italian peninsula which begins the canto (stanzas 1-3). In the same canto where Ariosto poses the problem, he also seems to identify the solution, or at least one possible reaction: marrying the invading enemy.

seeks out, saves and binds herself to the enemy (Ruggiero) and, by assimilating him, she also assimilates his territories.[267]

In evaluating Bradamante's active role, it is important to consider that she is also the main addressee and depositary of the dynastic prophecies revealing the future of the d'Este family and the only one to fully understand the stories – depicting the deeds of Ippolito d'Este – portrayed on the pavilion provided by Melissa to serve as a nuptial room for the newlyweds. Bradamante is the only one able and designated to understand a more complete image of the d'Este genealogy and, therefore, the genealogical repercussions of her actions.[268] As Stoppino suggests from this vantage, it is Bradamante (and not Ruggiero – as discussed in the fourth chapter), who appears to enact the role of Aeneas the founder, whose genealogical vision in the fourth book of the *Aeneid* is, in fact, a model for the prophetic experience of Bradamante in the third canto.[269]

Bradamante's marriage to Ruggiero, therefore, has a very important political value for it enables the transformation of the recently completed war from 'defensive' into 'offensive,' transforming the invading enemy into an opportunity for conquest.[270] It is precisely for this reason

[267] Among these women is also Ruggiero and Marfisa's mother, Galiziella, the protagonist of Andrea da Barberino's *Aspramonte*. As Stoppino explains, Helen of Troy is the generative topos for these women, objectified and forced to choose between competing loyalties; see Stoppino, *Genealogies*, 88-115. Assimilated and subjected to the power of Charlemagne and Christianity (38.17-18), Marfisa also brings her kingdoms as a dowry, but her submission is a personal choice, not the result of colonial activity. Though outside the scope of the present research, it could be argued that Marfisa's submission instead represents another point of view: the need for a small state such as the Duchy of Ferrara to associate (by submitting) with one of the great powers dominating the sixteen-century Europe.

[268] Ruggiero and Astolfo are also exposed to prophetic discourse and vision, but their experiences are fewer, and their understanding of the entire picture is much more fragmentary then Bradamante's. Bradamante, in fact, receives information regarding her future and her descendants in cantos 3, 13, 33 and 46, while Ruggiero only sees the sculpture of the Fonte di Merlino in canto 26 and listens to the hermit predictions in canto 41, while Astolfo, on the moon, is only able to see the "vello" destined to be Cardinal Ippolito.

[269] Stoppino proposes Bradamante, instead of Ruggiero, as the true founder of the new d'Este dynasty. See Stoppino, *Genealogies*, 119-124. On Bradamante as addressee of the dynastic prophecies, see also Jordan, "Writing." On the gender reversal of the addressee of the genealogical prophecies in the *Furioso* and the *Aeneid*, see also Andrew Fichter, *Poets Historical: Dynastic Epic in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

[270] In addition to having an important extra-textual function – establishing a noble genealogical origin for the house of d'Este, Ariosto's patrons – the marriage between Bradamante and Ruggiero thus also has an important intratextual function: that of transforming a defensive situation into an offensive one, transforming the assimilation of an invader into the conquest of a new territory. The marriage between the two characters would, in fact, not have been necessary

that Bradamante, a warrior woman, is chosen as Ruggiero's wife and the d'Este progenitor. To portray the final marriage as an act of conquest instead of submission, as a colonial act instead of a survival strategy, the poem requires a character with origins as noble as Ruggiero's (both Ruggiero and Bradamante have Astianatte as a common ancestor), a character with strength equal to Ruggiero's (like Ruggiero, Bradamante defeats Rodomonte, the strongest Saracen, and Ruggiero does not defeat her in their duel) and, above all, it needs a character able to play an active role in the story (Bradamante's love quest, but also her ability to negotiate between different loyalties).[271] Despite going through a process of feminization in the second part of the work, Bradamante thus never completely loses her warrior qualities (she will avenge Ruggiero's killing), and, even if within her social environment she seems to lose the right to decide for herself, she always retains a certain degree of agency, proving herself capable of modifying her own destiny.[272]

Bradamante's submission to bridal duties, therefore, is not only and entirely, an act of compliance with "bourgeois values" or a submission to "the law of the father" but also a conscious (active) choice by Bradamante to interpret a political role: a diplomatic colonial act.[273] So Bradamante's warrior quality and, more generally, her agency, do not only represent a threat to the social order in the *Furioso* – and also to its genealogical structure, as Stoppino has recently highlighted – but also represent a resource.[274] Beyond suggesting the possibility of a female

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if not for two specific reasons: the love between the two knights and Ruggiero's discovery of his own origins would have been enough for Ruggiero to abandon Agramante's side and complete the rejection of the Saracen invasion.

[271] It is interesting noting that despite the d'Este aggressive marriage strategy and its tendency to hypergamy, the marriage between Bradamante and Ruggiero appears to be an endogamic marriage. As Marina Beer has highlighted, Bradamante is the only one of the lovers in the poem who pursues their love object from beginning to end, a pursuit that ends precisely with her marriage; see Marina Beer, *Romanzi di cavalleria. Il «Furioso» e il romanzo italiano del primo Cinquecento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1987), 89.

[272] In fact, as Stoppino suggests in her analysis of the episode against its main sources, "marriage, by itself, represents not so much the final domestication of the woman warrior as the institutionalization of her powerful nature"; see Stoppino, *Genealogies*, 47.

[273] See Segre, *Esperienze*; and Finucci, *Lady*.

[274] As Stoppino explains, in the Italian *cantari* and chivalric texts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and specifically in the *Furioso*, "women are perceived as elements of instability within a genealogical structure, yet they

genealogy within the d'Este dynasty, as Stoppino notes, Bradamante's peculiar double nature and her wedding with Ruggiero also have the important function of tying the mythical origin of the d'Este family to a colonial act of conquest.[275]

Bradamante is also one of the many alter egos of Orlando and a clear pretender to his protagonist role.[276] Like Orlando, she falls in love with an enemy (a Saracen), she chases the object of her desire pursuing a love quest that traverses the whole work and she experiences the pains of lovesickness due to the frustration of her desire. Unlike Orlando, however, she manages, without the help of any other character or the author (in the guise of the *miglior spirto*), to overcome her feelings and accomplish the task at which Orlando fails:[277] to assimilate the invading enemy and thus cathartically heal and transform the wound of an invasion which, within the fiction, had reached the heart of France and Christianity but, outside of the fiction, in Ariosto's time, albeit with different interpreters (the great European powers and the Protestant heresy, as explained in the first chapter of this dissertation) threatened the independence of the small Duchy of Ferrara and of Christianity as a whole.

A comparison between the outcome of Bradamante and Ruggiero's final duel (Bradamante's fight for freedom) and the main literary source of the plot of the episode, the

are also the most necessary agents for the perpetuation of that structure. The role they play as the means of alliance makes them indispensable and threatening at the same time"; Stoppino, *Genealogies*, 89).

[275] As Stoppino suggests, the aggressive pursuit of marriage alliances, exogamic marriages and the tendency toward hypergamy which define the politics of marriage of the d'Este dynasty between the late fifteenth century and the early sixteenth "render marriage a site of definition and anxiety, the crucial and problematic moment of self-representation of the dynasty"; see Stoppino, *Genealogies*, 153. For the importance of the wedding theme within the *Furioso*, see Ezio Levi, "L'*Orlando furioso* come epopea nuziale," *Archivum romanicum* 17 (1933): 459-493; Remo Ceserani, "Due modelli culturali e narrative nell'*Orlando furioso*," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 161 (1984): 481-506; and, more recently, Stoppino, *Genealogies*. For the *Furioso* as a nuptial epic, see Levi, "*Orlando furioso*"; Stoppino, *Genealogies*.

[276] See also 78n160.

[277] After being healed by Astolfo, Orlando is probably the most efficient and powerful tool the Christian ranks have to reject the invading enemy, but the failure of his love quest does not allow him to conquer anything. He is only able to defeat the enemy, not conquer it. He is a strong soldier but cannot be the diplomatic tool Bradamante reveals herself to be.

cantare Historia di Bradiamonte in which Bradiamonte defeats and kills the Saracen King Almansor who wants to conquer her, reveals Ariosto's comment on the shifts of history: the precarious present condition of Christianity and the small Italian states, including the Duchy of Ferrara, as compared to the past.[278] Such comments dot the extradiegetic parts of the poem (for example, in the seventeenth canto, discussed above in the first chapter of this dissertation). While it was once possible to defend independence with arms, it is now necessary to apply the diplomatic ability to submit to a welcome enemy. But the wound caused by the submission remains. It is only healed by the text through the cultural assimilation of the invader in a colonial dream of the re-establishment of homogeneity that in fact presents Ruggiero (the assimilated invader) as the one bringing his territories as a dowry to Bradamante.

[278] Both works portray a marriage by duel between a male Saracen invader and a female Christian invaded party. Coming west with his army and asking for Bradiamonte as a wife – a stand-in for her territory – Almansor is, in fact, asking submission to her and to Charlemagne. The Christian attack on the enemy army following Bradiamonte's victory and Almansor's death is thus not a treacherous act but the last act of a defensive war, a necessary action to drive out a leaderless invading army.

Conclusion

> For decades, a classic joke has been circulating among Lacanians to exemplify the key role of the Other's knowledge: a man who believes himself to be a kernel of grain is taken to a mental institution where the doctors do their best to convince him that he is not a kernel of grain but a man; however, when he is cured (convinced that he is not a kernel of grain but a man) and allowed to leave the hospital, he immediately comes back, trembling and very scared—there is a chicken outside the door, and he is afraid it will eat him. "My dear fellow," says his doctor, "you know very well that you are not a kernel of grain but a man." "Of course, I know," replies the patient, "but does the chicken?"
>
> Slavoj Žižek[279]

As Jacques Lacan suggests, the mere existence of the 'other' looking at us forces us to become aware of ourselves.[280] The 'other' is the necessary and sufficient counterpoint of the identity of each one, the gravitational center of any search for an individual and group identity. Literary representations of the 'other' (real or imagined) can therefore reveal valuable information about the conscious and unconscious fears and desires of their producers and their respective cultures. An in-depth analysis of the description and function of the Saracens - 'the other', 'the enemy' - in *Orlando furioso* reveals the tensions and aspirations of the small but ambitious duchy of Ferrara, eager to expand its geopolitical influence and at the same time preoccupied with maintaining its independence, which was threatened, in Ariosto's time, by an aesthetically and culturally similar enemy.

The Middle Ages portrayed in the *Furioso* are a crossroads of different temporalities, interests and pressures that all influence the work at different levels. As I argue, Ariosto effectuates a shifting process that intertwines the context of his story and the context of his present day, thus intertwining text and context. In so doing, Ariosto reframes the story, its action and especially its

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[279] Slavoj Žižek, *Žižek's Jokes: Did You Hear the One about Hegel and Negation?* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), 67.

[280] See Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 2006).

enemy, transforming the expected cultural and aesthetic features of the *other*. In fact, the Saracen characters, as the first part of this dissertation details, undergo a general process of familiarization (westernization) which targets their aspect and their religion. Indeed, just as the whitewashing of the invading Saracens recalls the threat posed by the major European powers to the independence of small Italian states like Ferrara, so too does the Saracen religion, which the poem empties of its internal values and reproposes as just the absence of Christianity, appears to mimic the role of the reformist movements that Ariosto saw threatening Christianity, and especially Ferrara, from within. These problems were more pressing within Ariosto's cultural environment than the Turks and their Muslim religion and the text confronts them rather typically for its time by adopting a colonial attitude that has nonetheless gone neglected in the field of Ariosto studies.

A society defines itself through its definition of what is 'other'. Sometimes the definition of the 'other', especially when the producer of culture is invading another, turns out to be as the negative side of a photograph, which projects negative features and behaviors (stereotypes) onto the 'other' to demonstrate its inferiority. But in other occasions – as in the *Furioso*, which is produced within and portrays a culture being invaded – the so defined identity becomes a mirror which erases any sign of alterity to re-establish an original homogeneity that can minimize the shock of the invasion. In fact, the familiarization of the Saracens in the *Furioso*, as this dissertation has demonstrated, is not a sign of any acquired ability to see the 'other' as another self, one not marked by signs of otherness, but, instead, as a sign of the inability to accept an 'other' different from the self. It is the sign of a colonial desire that imposes its own stereotypes, dreaming of aesthetic and cultural homogeneity. Indeed, the Saracen invaders in the poem are not only defeated: some of them are assimilated, as are their territories.

The portrait of the Saracens is thus a unique “colonizing agent for the text” of the *Furioso*, a definition Jacqueline De Weever employs to describe the whitened Saracen princesses from medieval epics: it is in fact the invaded party who attempts to minimize the shock by assimilating the invader, making the invader less different, less threatening and even, as happens with Ruggiero in the *Furioso*, including the invader directly in its own genealogy.[281] As the fourth chapter has explained, Ruggiero embodies the total erasure of ‘otherness’, the complete assimilation of the East, deconstructed and reconstructed through rhetoric and inserted at the very beginning of a Western genealogy.

As Edmund Burke III and David Prochaska suggest, “orientalist representations took distinctively different shapes depending on the cultures of the colonizer and the colonized”. Similarly, the *Furioso* demonstrates that ‘orientalist representations’ take ‘distinctively different shapes’ also depending on whether the producer of culture is the invaded or the invader. In fact, as I have demonstrated above, the *Furioso* presents a specific form of defensive colonialism that familiarizes and assimilates an invading enemy, and which advocates diplomatic marriages as the defensive colonial instrument still available to small Italian states like Ferrara that needed to balance ambition with risk. As my fifth chapter has argued, Bradamante is the main instrument of this colonial enterprise. Subverting the typical gender stereotypes of medieval and Renaissance chivalric epics, the *Furioso* in fact presents the male Ruggiero as the Saracen to be conquered and assimilated and the female Bradamante as the Christian knight who actively chases, conquers and marries the Saracen ‘other,’ thereby assimilating him and his territories.

The Orientalism described by Said and the familiarization process analyzed in this dissertation therefore turn out to be two manifestations of the same colonial mindset that represent

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[281] De Weever, *Sheba's Daughters*, xxviii.

opposite and complementary ways of conceptualizing the other, each with its own objective. While Said's Orientalism superimposes contents to denigrate, diversify and control, the familiarization process which targets the Saracen characters in the *Furioso* deletes contents to hide and assimilate.

Ariosto's *Furioso* thus appears undergirded by a political agenda – in the same way that David Quint characterizes the *Aeneid*, the *Gerusalemme liberata* and *Paradise Lost*[282] – and the Saracens' portrait turns out to be a deceptive screen intended to replace reality through verbal techniques in the manner customary to political discourses. Milad Doueihi explains this replacement in *The Traps of Representation*:

> Political discourse in general, while claiming to address issues of reality, produces a set of screens or a series of simulacra that represent and replace reality and thus force the subject to enter into the domain of representation. Political discourse compensates for the lack of the real, for the impossibility of dealing directly with it, by generating an imaginary construct that is totally cut off from reality and that becomes an excess or a surplus in relation to the lack of the real. In this closed universe where representation functions to delimit access to the real, absolute power exerts itself, unquestioned and unchallenged.[283]

Ariosto replaces reality, and in so doing, is guided by anxieties, fears and desires that reflect the historical and political moment in which he is living.

In the *Furioso*, the clash between East and West, between Christians and Saracens, is not a simple actualization of the Carolingian matter but, instead, the reinterpretation of a *topos* that gives voice to a collective political unconscious. The 'other' – here, the Saracens – is a symbol capable of absorbing and conveying the fears and desires particular to the Italian political crisis: the sensation of being under attack, forced to accept the influence of an invading enemy, and the

[282] See Quint, *Epic*.
[283] Milad Doueihi, "The Traps of Representation," *Diacritics* 14:1 (1984): 66-77, 71.

contrary desire to resist the invasion by assimilating the enemy, familiarizing the enemy to the point of disappearance, mingling with him in marriage and procreating a future successor.

Particularly interesting for readers of the *Furioso* today, in an increasingly global world marked by massive migration flows sometimes portrayed as invasions, is Ariosto's Renaissance portrayal of a medieval environment marked significantly by signs of transculturality. In fact, as discussed in the fourth chapter, the process of familiarizing the Saracen characters favors the representation of a world without a clear border between cultures. The *Furioso* creates a fluid space where aesthetic and moral values are shared and individual choices, are responsible for the characters' cultural identity: it is a world where the relationships internal to one culture exhibit as much foreignness as its relationships with a second culture.[284] The Saracen invader Ruggiero is the main target of the familiarization enacted by the text. As the 'other' who needs to be assimilated, he appears endowed with what would today be called a transcultural identity: he overcomes the cultural borders to have nothing really 'other' or 'foreign' to him anymore. Ruggiero's identity and culture are a hybrid construction developed through discourse, a negotiation of meanings that makes him the easiest invader to familiarize and re-conquer, at least illusorily.

With this dissertation, I hope to have established a hermeneutic circle between the poem as a whole and the passages I have analyzed and to have given due attention also to corners of the poem that resist my interpretation. I believe I have proposed an analysis which does not claim to contradict existing tendencies in Ariosto studies but complement them, by offering but one of the many possible interpretations of a poem that has always invited multiple meanings and readings and that still today seems to invite more.

[284] See 96-97 above, especially 97n196.

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