

# THE DEMONIZED «INIMICO ALTERO» AND ITS REPRESENTATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF ITALIAN AND FRENCH EPIC ON LEPANTO

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**RIASSUNTO:** La figura eticamente ambigua dell'«Altro» forma il nucleo del sistema dell'epica eroica cristiana, tradizionalmente antinomico. Mito secolare, proiezione culturale, tema letterario fondamentale (CESERANI 1998), l'immagine dello «Straniero», dell'«Avversario» o, in altre parole, dell'«Altro» fa parte dell'allegorica dicotomia del bene e del male, essendo spesso dotata di connotazioni demoniache. La tendenza a demonizzare la complessa immagine dell'«Altro» è particolarmente evidente nel caso dei poemi che appartengono al ciclo dell'epica storica «moderna» su Lepanto. Il saggio tratta dei vari modi di proiettare la figura dell'avversario storico sulla «scacchiera» della «moderna» epica cristiana e si focalizza sull'analisi di varie modalità di fondere la figura dell'«Altro» Ottomano con la dimensione del «meraviglioso demoniaco» adottato dai poeti allo scopo di arricchire, complicare e controbilanciare la sacralità dell'epica eroica.

**PAROLE CHIAVE:** Altro, meraviglioso demoniaco, Lepanto, Francesco Bolognetti, Tommaso Costo, Vincenzo Metello, Pierre de Deimier

**ABSTRACT:** The ethically controversial figure of the «Other» forms the heart of the traditionally antinomic system of the heroic Christian epic. An age-long myth, a cultural projection and an essential literary theme (CESERANI 1998), the image of the «Stranger», the «Adversary», or, in other words, the «Other», being frequently endowed with demonic connotations, is found to be part and parcel of the allegorical dichotomy of good and evil. The literary tendency towards demonizing the complex image of the «Other» is particularly evident in the poems belonging to the category of «modern» historical epic on Lepanto. The present essay aims to investigate various ways of transposing the figure of the historical adversary onto the «chessboard» of «modern» Christian epic, as well as to analyze the variety of literary modalities of merging the figure of the Ottoman

“Other” with the dimension of the “demonic marvellous”, adopted by the poets to enrich, complicate and counterbalance the heroic sacrality of the epic text.

KEY-WORDS: Other, demonic marvellous, Lepanto, Francesco Bolognetti, Tommaso Costo, Vincenzo Metello, Pierre de Deimier

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Païen unt tort, e chrestien unt dreit.  
(*Chanson de Roland*)

Mi rendo conto che senza Oriente  
noialtri “occidentali” non possiamo né  
vivere né definire noi stessi.  
(Franco Cardini, *L'invenzione del Nemico*)

## 1. INTRODUCTION. THE “STRANGER”: «A TEXTUAL STRUCTURE, A STORY, A REPRESENTATION»

«Lo straniero [...] prima ancora di essere un personaggio di miti e di storie, è un’immagine o proiezione culturale presente nella psicologia e nell’immaginario dei popoli [...], quasi sempre caricata di valori simbolici e ideologici [...]»:<sup>1</sup> in this way, Remo Ceserani defined the essence of the concept of the “Stranger”, putting particular emphasis on its cultural and symbolical connotations. A projection, rather than a phenomenon being in-itself, the notion of the “Stranger” thus by definition implies the presence of the “Other”, a perspective that illuminates it and, in a way, brings it to life. The concept of the “Stranger” or the “Foreigner” as a generic term (for instance, used in relation to a community, a country, or a nation) often coincides with the notion of the “Other”,<sup>2</sup> in particular, in a situation

<sup>1</sup> CESERANI 1998: 7.

<sup>2</sup> As Giovanni Baffetti points out in relation to Tasso’s favourite mask of the «Forestiero Napolitano», «il forestiero è l’altro, è colui che viene da fuori, e proprio per questo deve istituire un dialogo; ma al tempo stesso resta sempre un ospite, quando non un nemico» (BAFFETTI 2012: 59). According to Ezio Raimondi, the mask of the «Forestiero Napolitano» implies an essential «rapporto di estraneità, una condizione di differenza o di erranza “déracinée”», as well as introducing «una prospettiva, una spazialità simbolica ma insieme reale» (RAIMONDI 2008: 141-142).

of external threat. In other words, «tanto più le comunità si sentono deboli e indifese e minacciate nella propria sicurezza e identità, tanto più le figure degli stranieri vengono caricate di valori negativi»,<sup>3</sup> the image of the “Other” thus tends to be easily stereotyped and transformed into the one of the “Enemy”.

The role of literature in dealing with the cultural projection of the “Foreigner” or the “Other” has always been, to quote once again Ceserani’s words, «duplice e contraddittoria»: on the one hand, to model the “Other”, the authors oftentimes chose to «sottolinearne e rafforzarne le caratteristiche “altre” e differenzianti [...]», whilst making extensive use of the «strumenti rappresentativi e conoscitivi per smontare dall’interno quei tratti di rigidità ideologica», having thus transformed the “Stranger” into «un essere ambiguo e complicato, in un personaggio e tema più propriamente letterari»,<sup>4</sup> on the other hand. The figure of the “Other”, far from being subject to a simplistic unilateral approach, thus constitutes an ambiguous and problematic literary theme: «una struttura testuale, una storia, una rappresentazione»;<sup>5</sup> an age-long myth and a complex literary figure.<sup>6</sup>

The literary theme of the “Other” is found to be crucial in the context of epic poetry, the figure of the “Stranger” having been seen primarily in the light of the antagonism between the Christians and the Islamic adversaries and having inspired a vast number of epic poems. The whole historical and ideological context of the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, having been influenced by the climate of the Counter-Reformation, as well as by the long-nurtured projects of the new Crusades, formed the perfect background for such literary polarization in a period when the identities of the Occidental and the Oriental worlds were menaced by continuous violent confrontations.

<sup>3</sup> CESERANI 1998: 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> Crucial examples may be found in epic poetry: thus, Homer’s Ulysses is a hero that embodies the figure of a «mysterious stranger» (CESERANI 1998: 5-6), whereas Virgil’s *Aeneid* shows the tendency to «project» the notions of “foreignness” and “otherness” onto the military adversary thus marking the appearance of the crucial epic principle of antagonism (ZATTI 2000: 86).

## 2. THE FIGURE OF THE “OTHER” ON THE “CHESSBOARD” OF THE EPIC POEM

«Autrui, c'est l'autre, c'est-à-dire le moi qui n'est pas moi»: in this well-known paradoxical phrase, Jean-Paul Sartre emphasized the difference, as well as the potential affinity between the notions of «the self» («le moi») and «the other» («l'autre»), the latter one being defined namely with an anaphoric reference to the first one. The indissoluble link between the two antinomic notions was further stressed by the French philosopher, as he developed his thought in *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*: «Pour obtenir une vérité quelconque sur *moi*, il faut que je passe par *l'autre*». <sup>7</sup> The quotations mentioned above appear to be extremely relevant in the context of the poetic cycle dedicated to the Oriental wars with the Ottoman Empire and, moreover, in the context of literary art as such. To quote Jurij Lotman, «se si prende un qualunque testo artistico o mitologico, si può dimostrare che alla base dell'organizzazione interna degli elementi c'è, come regola, un principio di opposizione semantica binaria». <sup>8</sup> From this perspective, epic poetry presents itself as an emblematic case in which the opposition between “self” and “other” proves to be of crucial significance as it forms the dialectical basis, as well as the semantic and the structural core, of the poetic text. The opposition between the two parties of a war clearly defining one of them as “us” and the other one as the “enemy”, or the antagonistic “Other”, can indeed be traced already in the ancient authors, and moreover, it presents itself as a core textual element forming the heart of the epic poem. <sup>9</sup> It is in the light of the absolute necessity for «antagonistic diversity» that Sergio Zatti mentions the primary feature that heroic Christian epic inherits from the chivalric prototexts: «la più arcaica manicheizzazione del romanzo cavalleresco: l'opposizione fra Cristiani e Infedeli». <sup>10</sup> However, if in the case of a number of the Renaissance epic poems, the topical confrontation between the Christians and the Saracens is a constant that underlies the poetic text, it is yet far from being the unique or the predominant one. According to Angelo Pagliardini, «l'adozione di questa tematica da parte dei poeti rinascimentali porta spesso ad un superamento di

<sup>7</sup> SARTRE 1996: 37 (the italics are mine).

<sup>8</sup> LOTMAN 1976: 280.

<sup>9</sup> PAGLIARDINI 2008: 35.

<sup>10</sup> ZATTI 1996: 100.

una delimitazione netta, una partizione binaria del campo in spazi, personaggi e valori abbinati ad un codice comprendente le sole alternative, positività-inclusione-noi versus negatività-esclusione-altro». <sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note that in Boiardo's *Orlando innamorato*, the difference between the Christian and the Saracen identities can sometimes be viewed as a vague one, Orlando being capable of pretending to be a Saracen knight in order to defend the king of Damascus. <sup>12</sup> This «attenuation» of the Christian identity of the chivalric hero comes to a crescendo in Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*: the hero is spurred into military action by his love for Angelica while his "Christian" motivation seems to be rather unstable. <sup>13</sup> To say it with the splendid metaphor of Italo Calvino, «*L'Orlando Furioso* è un'immensa partita di scacchi che si gioca sulla carta geografica del mondo», in which «l'essere "di fè diversi" non significa molto di più, nel *Furioso*, che il diverso colore dei pezzi di una scacchiera». <sup>14</sup> In this «boundless» "game of chess", there is no rigid dichotomy between Christian and Islamic camps since the warriors are perceived, as the chivalric tradition would have it, as knights of different faith, no drastic distinction being made as to the Christian and the Saracen identities:

I tempi delle Crociate in cui il ciclo dei Paladini aveva assunto un valore simbolico di lotta per la vita e per la morte tra la Cristianità e l'Islam, sono lontani. In verità nessun passo avanti sembra si sia fatto per comprendere gli «altri», gli «infedeli», i «Mori»: si continua a parlare dei Maomettani come «pagani» e adoratori di idoli [...]. Però essi sono rappresentati su un piano di parità con i Cristiani per quel che riguarda il valore e la civiltà; e senza quasi nessuna caratterizzazione esotica, o notazione di costumi diversi da quelli d'Occidente. [...] Sono dei signori feudali tal quale i cavalieri cristiani, e neanche li distingue la convenzionale differenziazione delle uniformi negli eserciti moderni, perché qui gli avversari si contendono e scambiano sempre le stesse corazze e elmi e armi e cavalcature. <sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> PAGLIARDINI 2008: 35. For the specific modalities of representing the «World beyond Europe» in Boiardo and Ariosto, see CAVALLO 2013 and PAVLOVA 2020; for the analysis of «identità, alterità, conflitti» in *Orlando furioso*, see DI GESÙ 2020.

<sup>12</sup> PAGLIARDINI 2008: 52.

<sup>13</sup> Ivi: 52-53.

<sup>14</sup> CALVINO 1970: XXIII.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

In this perspective, the formation of a clear distinction between characters based on their belonging to the Christian army or the hostile camp can be viewed as a much more complex and multi-stage process in Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, as well as in the *mare magnum* of epic texts dedicated to military confrontations with the Ottoman Empire. The crucial change of perspective was undoubtedly favoured by the climate and the rigid tenets of the Counter-Reformation that were immediately reflected in the epic poetry of the period. From this point of view, the figure of the adversary became ethically controversial, the warriors from the Islamic camp from now on being perceived not as substantially similar chess pieces of different colour, but namely as the "Other", radically different, *a priori* incompatible with and in many ways inferior to the Christians.<sup>16</sup>

From a perspective explicitly focusing on the antithesis between the Christian and the Islamic civilisation, the latter embodying the hostile concept of the "Other", the events of the war with the Ottoman Empire became a perfect *materia* for the Christian epic written between the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> and the first part of the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Continuous violent confrontations with the Ottoman East can undoubtedly be seen from various perspectives, being determined as well by the political and territorial ambitions of the parties, yet they implied, significantly enough, a clash between two civilisations rooted in religious and cultural traditions that could in no way see themselves as easily interchangeable. This ontological incompatibility, immediately assimilated by epic poetry, was particularly stressed by Fernand Braudel: «Il n'y a que les utopistes [...] pour rêver de fondre les religions entre elles : les religions, ce qu'il y a justement de plus personnel, de plus résistant dans ce complexe des biens, de forces, de systèmes qu'est toute civilisation».<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> This Counter-Reformation perspective of the undoubted superiority of the Christian civilisation had a profound impact on epic poetry, whereas the much more tolerant viewpoint of «l'arte della pace» indispensable to an exemplary Christian prince (as the one described in Erasmus' *Institutio Principis Christiani*) was viewed as a clearly utopian one («Introduzione» in ERASMO, *L'educazione del principe cristiano* [Canfora]: XXVIII). It is yet interesting to mention that Erasmus drew particular attention to the issue of the imminent threat of the Oriental war, advocating the absolute need for peace and refusing to consider the Eastern civilisation as an "inferior" one: «I Turchi, contro cui alcuni esorterebbero a combattere – come potranno mai – si chiede Erasmo – considerarci superiori, dal momento che noi esibiamo permanentemente un modello di comportamento fondato sulla discordia e sulla corruzione?» (*ibidem*).

<sup>17</sup> BRAUDEL 1966: 101.

Although recent historical research tends to offer various views on the real nature of the relationship between Mediterranean Europe and the Ottoman Empire,<sup>18</sup> in the literary perspective, a vast number of the epic texts converge on adopting a more rigid, traditional approach: the adversary might be presented ambiguously and not be deprived of positive traits or virtues, yet he is undeniably perceived as the “Other”, i.e. as a part of a different civilisation. Indeed, the belonging of the character to the Ottoman (or the Christian) camp implies possessing an identity that might be subject to transformations in the course of a poem (e.g. due to the Christian hero’s temporary deviation or the Islamic knight’s eventual conversion), but the warrior’s religious identity tends to have a «valore simbolico di lotta per la vita e per la morte tra la Cristianità e l’Islam», this being a major factor for understanding both the hero’s personality and the way he correlates with other characters of the poem.

### 3. THE ROLE OF THE INFERNAL DIMENSION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EPIC GENRE

To quote the apt definition offered by Ezio Raimondi, the essence of the Christian epic poem consists primarily in its being «polarized» by the «opposizione semantica fondamentale “proprio” vs “estraneo”, a cui si aggregano [...] le antitesi complementari cielo-terra, ordine-disordine, bene-male, luce-buio [...] lungo una scala di valori etico-religiosi». <sup>19</sup> The entire literary theme of the “Other” or the “Stranger” (the Adversary or the “Enemy” in the case of the epic poems on Lepanto) reveals to be perfectly inscribed in an allegorical context that forms the poetic reality of “modern” historical epic and defines

<sup>18</sup> Upon the extremely ambiguous relationship between Italy and the Ottoman Empire, see CARDINI 2006; RICCI 2002; ID. 2008. For a meticulous analysis of the complex relations between the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Empire, see PEDANI 1994 and EAD. 2010. Interesting perspectives on political, economic, diplomatic and cultural relationships between the Italian Peninsula and the Ottoman Levant can be found in ARFAIOLI - CAROSCIO 2016. See also NEGRUZZO 2019, the study containing the transcription of the compelling «Relatione dell’Imperio Turchesco» composed by Friar Domenico Bisanti, as well as references to other historical sources of interest. For the *renovatio* of the notion of the “Crusade” in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and a detailed analysis of the historical reasons underlying the myth of the “modern” Crusade, see PELLEGRINI 2014; ID. 2015.

<sup>19</sup> RAIMONDI 1980: 127.

its dualistic structure. In this perspective, the historical level represents the confrontation between the Occidental and the Oriental worlds, whereas the allegorical level refers to the war between the Divine and the Infernal forces in a Heaven that, as Sergio Zatti puts it, is no longer a serene «Olimpo omerico»,<sup>20</sup> but the arena of fierce controversy between the two antagonistic parties. Needless to say, the two levels closely correlate and continuously interact with each other, the historical “enemy” tending to reflect the image of the allegorical one. In this view, the figure of the “Other” is often associated with the dimension of hell and thus it might acquire not merely negative, but even diabolical features. Yet, the role and function of the demonic universe varies from text to text: according to Sergio Zatti, one of the most striking errors committed by Trissino in his *Italia liberata dai Goti* consisted in the author’s having neglected the dimension of hell: while abounding in the elements constituting the area of the “meraviglioso cristiano”, the poem totally lacks in the “meraviglioso demoniaco” and as a consequence it fails to demonstrate «un vero conflitto», thus resulting in an asymmetric and an insipid narrative structure.<sup>21</sup> Yet, if the «edificio» of an epic poem does not necessarily have to be a sumptuous «palagio» «magnificentissimo, ricchissimo ed ornatissimo»,<sup>22</sup> it surely has to be built on a solid foundation that logically presupposes the insertion of both structural elements of the dichotomy. In other words, the basic structural element of the “Christian marvellous” implies the presence of the Christian “demonic” one, the two elements forming the basis of the *inventio*: as perfectly demonstrated by Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata*, the heavenly and the infernal dimensions might not be given equal consideration in the narrative space of the epic text,<sup>23</sup> yet for the solid «palagio» of the poem not to collapse, the presence of the first element should be counterbalanced by the insertion of the second one.

Unlike Trissino, Tasso insisted upon the need for inserting the “demonic marvellous” into the epic poem both in his theoretical treatises and literary works: thus, his *Messaggiero* and the *Discorsi dell’arte poetica* clearly illustrate the fundamental role the diabol-

<sup>20</sup> ZATTI 1996: 101.

<sup>21</sup> «[...] assimilando i goti all’alterità religiosa dei pagani della tradizione cavalleresca, Trissino non crea parallelamente un inferno, cioè un “meraviglioso demoniaco” che sorregga quella diversità antagonistica dandole fondamento e spessore ideologico» (ivi: 100-101).

<sup>22</sup> TASSO, *Apologia*: f. D1r.

<sup>23</sup> ZATTI 1996: 100-101.



ical world has to play in the universe of the epic poem.<sup>24</sup> First and foremost, as stated in the famous passage of the *Discorsi*, the presence of the “meraviglioso demoniaco” enables the author of the Christian heroic epic to «accoppiare il meraviglioso co ’l verisimile»,<sup>25</sup> the marvellous «operations» ascribed to the demons being perceived by the Christian reader as no less credible («verisimili») than the ones attributed to God or his angels,<sup>26</sup> whereas miracles ascribed to the «deità de’ gentili» are on the contrary considered as «false»<sup>27</sup> ones. The idea appears to perfectly reflect the Counter-Reformistic climate: to quote Giovanni Baffetti’s words, «dal momento che [Tasso’s reflection upon the credibility of the “Christian marvellous”] offre la soluzione a un problema concreto di poetica, conciliando l’aristotelismo critico con le richieste del gusto moderno, la cornice religiosa, ancora nel clima di un acceso fervore posttridentino, non si limita a circoscrivere l’ambito tematico e diviene anzi un principio strutturale interno al poema, orientandone il sistema di valori etici e culturali sulla base di ben definite coordinate assiologiche».<sup>28</sup>

Tasso’s further demonological reflection containing close affinities with the ideas stated in the *Discorsi*,<sup>29</sup> can be traced in *Il Messaggero*. As Giovanni Baffetti rightly points out, the dialogue, being largely inspired by the Neoplatonic tradition,<sup>30</sup> firmly states the absolute necessity of the existence of the demons conditioned by the «perfetta compiutezza dell’ordine provvidenziale e teleologico che governa l’universo».<sup>31</sup> *Il Messaggero*,

<sup>24</sup> The peculiar character of Tassian “meraviglioso demoniaco” was emphasized by Lanfranco Caretti: «Il “demoniaco” tassiano nulla ha a che vedere con il “meraviglioso naturale” dell’Ariosto, che è pura finzione romanzesca, divertimento diavolistico; essa piuttosto adombra, al di là delle figurazioni letterarie d’ascendenza classica in cui spesso prende forma, l’inquieta e ansiosa coscienza che il Tasso ebbe, e talvolta esasperò, delle misteriose forze che insidiano la nostra esistenza, e la fanno incerta e dolorosa, insinuandosi nei cuori e agitando oscuramente [...]» (CARETTI 1970: 99).

<sup>25</sup> TASSO, *Discorsi* [Poma]: 18.

<sup>26</sup> Ivi: 7-8.

<sup>27</sup> Ivi: 6.

<sup>28</sup> BAFFETTI 2017: 55.

<sup>29</sup> Ivi: 56.

<sup>30</sup> Although there is no direct proof that Tasso had read Ficino’s translation of Psello’s *De daemonibus* and he for sure did not borrow the detailed classification of demons offered by Psello, it is highly probable that he was influenced by its ideas indirectly: «[...] il testo di Psello, che ebbe vastissima diffusione, rappresenta un paradigma fondamentale di riferimento per quella cultura magica-demonologica di cui si nutre profondamente la disponibilità visionaria, l’umbratile sensibilità dello scrittore, pur senza ambire, forse, a derivarne un sistema coerente» (ivi: 53).

<sup>31</sup> Ivi: 52.

as well as *La Gerusalemme Liberata*, indeed abounds in descriptions of crucial demonic features that tend to overlap with the characteristics of various kinds of demons found in *De daemonibus*. It is noteworthy that most of them frequently appear in the poems on Lepanto that we shall now turn to, with a view to analyzing the role and function of the figure of the Ottoman adversary – always in correlation with the demonic forces – in the narrative space of epic texts.

#### 4. «L'INFERNAL MOSTRO IN CORPO UMANO»: VARIOUS MODALITIES OF DEMONIZING THE ADVERSARY

According to the treatise attributed to Psello, an essential point about the demonic world is linked to the metamorphic ability of the demons, i.e. the motive of the multiple and the formless: «il motivo dell'informe, del disordine e della confusione disgregatrice, associato alla dimensione diabolica».<sup>32</sup> It is precisely under the sign of the diabolic principle of formlessness, confusion and chaos that the essential convergence of the figure of the “Other” – the “Barbaric” Christian adversary – and the infernal dimension takes place. To paraphrase Sergio Zatti's well-know formula, the “multiforme demoniaco” is naturally transposed into the Ottoman identity, the *topos* of multitude being present in all of the analyzed texts. To provide an example, in Francesco Bolognetti's *Vittoria marittima*, the Ottoman fleet is perceived in terms of the concept of a chaotic and an ill-disciplined multitude, the syntagms «immensa turba»,<sup>33</sup> «turba vil» (or slight variations, such as «sì vil turba»),<sup>34</sup> «la barbarica turba»<sup>35</sup> and «turba Oriental»<sup>36</sup> being used to refer to «i Barbari disordinati e sparti».<sup>37</sup> A couple of other typical examples from Vincenzo Metello's *Marte*: the Ottoman fleet «esce nel mar [...] con l'infinita quantità di legni» attacking the

<sup>32</sup> Ivi: 57.

<sup>33</sup> BOLOGNETTI, *La Christiana vittoria marittima*, I 69: 14.

<sup>34</sup> Ivi, III 88: 57.

<sup>35</sup> Ivi, III 117: 57.

<sup>36</sup> Ivi, III 92: 52.

<sup>37</sup> Ivi, III 90: 52. Similarly, the narrator of Costo's poem mentions the «esercito infinito» deployed by the «fiero Barbaro» (COSTO, *La vittoria della Lega*, I 8: 6).

Holy League's fleet with a devastating «tempesta di saette».<sup>38</sup> As can be seen in the following distich, multitude as a primary characteristic of the “Barbaric” adversary directly correlates with chaos and multitude intrinsic to the demonic dimension: «E tanta moltitudine qui corre, / ch'a Demoni l'Inferno potran torre».<sup>39</sup>

Another crucial trait in common for the inhabitants of the demonic world is their ability to intervene into human lives by way of sending «false visioni» thus conveying «impressioni vane e passioni smodate che spingono gli animi al delirio e alla pazzia».<sup>40</sup> As shown by Baffetti, the theme of the demonic interventions into human life reveals itself to be present as well in Tasso's *Messaggero*, the poet putting special emphasis upon the demons' capability of infinite metamorphoses<sup>41</sup> aimed at tricking humans by resorting to «nuovi e meravigliosi modi» and «alcune immaginarie invenzioni».<sup>42</sup> The given *topos* can be traced in a variety of epic texts constituting the innovative “historical” category of poems dedicated to modern events, the demonic interventions tending to have a crucial impact on Selim II, in particular inciting him to wage war against the Christian world. The motive is especially evident in Bolognetti's *Christiana vittoria maritima*, the narrator stressing the extremely idle and weak-willed nature of the Ottoman sultan devoted only to the endless pursuit of pleasures.<sup>43</sup> The metamorphosis he undergoes in the first canto of the poem is entirely due to the intervention of «Belzebù rio» and takes two stages. During the first one, the Demon assumes the form of the illustrious admiral and trusted counselor of the sultan,<sup>44</sup> assimilating both his physical and moral characteristics.

<sup>38</sup> METELLO, *Il Marte*, III: 16-17.

<sup>39</sup> Ivi, III: 15.

<sup>40</sup> BAFFETTI 2017: 52-53.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>42</sup> TASSO, *Il Messaggero*: 358, quoted in BAFFETTI 2017: 53. It seems important to stress the Neoplatonic character of the magic procedure: the demonic intervention is different from the epic *topos* of the messenger communicating the divine or the infernal will, as the «false visions» imply an almost physical *impression* of the ephemeral form assumed by the demon into the destinatory's imaginative spirit or *pneuma* (*ibidem*).

<sup>43</sup> «[...] anchor non satio di piacer, ma stracco / di sua natura volto era alla pace; / devoto sol di Venere e di Bacco, / d'altra religion non si compiace» (BOLOGNETTI, *La Christiana vittoria maritima*, I 39: 9).

<sup>44</sup> The narrator portrays the «finto Bassà» in a detailed way, mentioning his appearance (white hair, sumptuous clothes, a turban covered with gems), as well as his moral qualities («gagliardo, e franco») (ivi, I, 38: 9). The metamorphosis, however, does not bear an absolute character, as Beelzebub conceals «sotto i panni ascoso il fero artiglio» (ivi, I 40: 9), i.e. the traditional physical attribute of the devil.

Similarly to the real Ottoman warrior, known for his inclination toward «l'arte», «l'astutia» and «l'inganno»,<sup>45</sup> the «finto Bassà» shows himself an excellent orator as with his ardent well-structured discourse<sup>46</sup> he succeeds in persuading the sultan to wage war against the Christians. Selim's emotional metamorphosis is completed by the second part of the Devil's apt intervention: having finished his persuasive speech, Beelzebub sends a «venomous» ray to affect the sultan's heart that had already been full of «rabbia, e [...] ardor».<sup>47</sup> At this stage, the metamorphosis is complete, Selim having been transformed into a mere marionette in the hands of the astute Demon: «[...] fu spinto, e costretto, / qual destrier facil da voltar col freno, / a lasciarsi guidar là dove vuole / quel mentitor di faccia e di parole».<sup>48</sup>

A similar, yet simpler, transformation takes place in Metello's *Marte* as «il gran Signor dei giri tenebroso»<sup>49</sup> sends his Furies to poison the heart and the mind of the irresolution Ottoman sultan with voracious ambitions, making his thoughts «bramosi di strage, di flagelli e di ruine, / e di mal, che non habbia mai più fine».<sup>50</sup> Unlike the more complex two-stage metamorphosis described by Bolognetti, in *Il Marte* the effect of the spell is immediate: «Già chiama le sue genti a cose nove [...], / ordina già, ch'al mondo si rinove [...]».<sup>51</sup> The final scene seems to echo the end of the respective episode in the first poem, yet there is a crucial difference referring not only to the process of the transformation, but to its consequence as well. While Bolognetti's poem shows Selim totally deprived of his own will as he submissively asks the «finto» counselor to give him further instructions and promises to «always» obey his «wise advice»,<sup>52</sup> the Ottoman sultan in *Il Marte*, hav-

<sup>45</sup> Ivi, I 37: 9.

<sup>46</sup> Beelzebub's discourse is indeed carefully organized to impact the listener. Thus, the Demon starts his speech using the efficient rhetoric technique of *captatio benevolentiae* consisting in flattering the recipient in order to please him and continues reminding the sultan of the glory of his ancestors, thus motivating him to continue the age-long tradition of conquests.

<sup>47</sup> Ivi, I 47: 10.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>49</sup> METELLO, *Il Marte*, I: 4.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>51</sup> Ivi, I: 6.

<sup>52</sup> «O saggio amico mio, / di cui non ho più fido, e più sincero, / altro non posso, né vuò dir, perch'io / tutto confermo il tuo parlar per vero / [...] / Il core, hoggi tel mostro, e pronto sono / a seguir sempre il tuo consiglio buono» (BOLOGNETTI, *La Christiana vittoria maritima*, I 48-49: 11).

ing been contaminated with the demonic ambition, still demonstrates total confidence in his own power, being described by the narrator as a «Re di valor estremo». <sup>53</sup> No instructions from the devil are needed in this case, the sultan's ultimate aim being formulated in a perfectly clear and confident way: «E sopra ogn'altra por vuol la sua fede, / riducendo l'estremo suo potere, / per voler terra e mar tutto ottenere». <sup>54</sup> Exactly as in other texts on Lepanto, the sultan does not occupy much narrative space in Metello's poem, yet the author endows him with a salient trait: the one of being a real "tiranno" whose fierce eyes, similarly to the glance of the Demon arouse sharp terror. Quite unlike the submissive Selim from Bolognetti's text, the sultan in Metello's poem even being under the demonic spell, is still far from being the Devil's puppet incapable of formulating his own will.

The increase of the tendency towards showing the Ottoman sultan as a more independent figure can be traced in Tommaso Costo's *Vittoria della Lega*, the Neapolitan poet explicitly accentuates the tyrannical nature of «quel potente Selim». <sup>55</sup> From the very beginning of the poem, the sultan is shown as a despotic ruler whose desire of power knows no limits and whose ultimate ambition is to conquer the abhorred Christian world: «Credeasi con pensier crudo e acerbo / in breve ogn'altro Imperio haver distrutto, / e'l popolo fedele al divin verbo / in miseria condur con pianto e lutto [...]». <sup>56</sup> The fierceness of the tyrant along with his «folle ardire» <sup>57</sup> brings him to attack «il bel Regno / consacrato a l'amorosa Dea». <sup>58</sup> Unlike his counterparts in the previous poems, Selim is shown not only as a despotic, but also as an astute ruler: before breaking the peace treaty with the Venetian Republic, he asks the Senators for a «cosa inonesta» <sup>59</sup> hoping that his request will not be satisfied and thus he will be enabled to break the treaty. Dishonesty, inclination towards intrigues and deception, a ferocious and unbridled disposition – Costo's Selim possesses all of the features traditionally ascribed to the demons, but no real

<sup>53</sup> METELLO, *Il Marte*, II: 8.

<sup>54</sup> Ivi, I: 4.

<sup>55</sup> COSTO, *La vittoria della Lega*, I 4: 6.

<sup>56</sup> Ivi, I 5: 6.

<sup>57</sup> Ivi, I 6: 6.

<sup>58</sup> Ivi, I 7: 6.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*.

fusion between the allegorical and the historical levels takes place in this case, as diabolical interventions play no part in the tyrant's independent decisions.

A similar tendency towards largely reducing the demonic part while opting for a more historical vision of the Ottoman "Other" can be observed in Pierre de Deimier's *Austriade* composed thirty years after the event of Lepanto. The epic abounds in essential Christian connotations, the celestial dimension occupying crucial space in the poetic narration, whereas the presence of the demonic sphere is manifested mainly through the references to «Mahon» or the «maudit Pluton»<sup>60</sup> made by the Ottoman warriors as they pray or curse the infernal forces blaming them for their defeat. In Deimier's text, the Ottoman sultan is neither a devil's puppet, nor a demonized monster, but, similarly to the image offered by Tommaso Costo, is viewed as a «Prince ambitieux» who is eager to continue the glorious conquests of his predecessors. Like Costo's Selim, Deimier's character breaks the peace treaty being spurred mainly by «l'orage de son ambition» as he feels the need for accomplishing «quelque haute entreprise»<sup>61</sup> not to feel inferior to his glorious ancestors. Exactly as was the case with the previous poem, Selim's ambition is not in the least conditioned by the notions of honour or justice: the fierce sultan acts «sans épargner l'honneur, le droit, ny la raison»<sup>62</sup> and is eager to achieve his aims by stealth and cunning often proceeding «par ruse».<sup>63</sup>

It is essential to mention that, as far as the figure of Selim II is concerned,<sup>64</sup> his purely negative and often demonically connoted characteristics are in most cases accompanied by a particular kind of virtue: the one that Tasso refers to as a «virtù naturale». The concept of the «natural virtue», meticulously analyzed by the poet in *Il Forno, ovvero de la Nobiltà*, reveals to be ontologically different from both the notions of «nobility», «moral virtue» and «heroic virtue», seeming to perfectly define the essence of the poetic

<sup>60</sup> DEIMIER, *L'Austriade*, II: 110.

<sup>61</sup> Ivi, *L'Austriade*, «Argument»: 2.

<sup>62</sup> Ivi, I: 2.

<sup>63</sup> Ivi, I: 5.

<sup>64</sup> On the whole, the figure of the Ottoman sultan in the poems in question presents itself as a less complex and ambiguous figure as compared to the «caratterizzazione ricca e complessa» of Soliman in Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* (FAVARO 2021: 249). For the hypothesis of the «parziale rivalutazione» of the tyrant, as well as for a detailed analysis of Tassian reflection upon the complex and fascinating correlation of the notions of «nobiltà», «tirannia» and «virtù eroica», see ivi: 221-279.

representations of the Ottoman “Other”. Thus, in Tasso’s view, «virtù naturale» equals innate virtues (strength or valour) and unlike the “acquired” «virtù morale» is not necessarily accompanied by all of the other virtues that, as the Christian chivalric tradition would have it, include valiance, strength, justice, piety and temperance:

sempre una virtù morale tutte l’altre presuppone, né può alcun esser forte, che non sia insieme giusto, e temperato. Ma delle virtù naturali alcuna si può ritrovare scompagnata dall’altre, perché può alcuno nascer con inclinazione alla fortezza, e non averne alcuna alla temperanza o alla liberalità.<sup>65</sup>

The «natural virtues» of «fortezza» being complemented by admirable bravery yet counterbalanced by ferocity, cruelty and dishonesty can often be traced in the portrayals of the Ottoman sultan,<sup>66</sup> as well as in the descriptions of the Ottoman commanders and ordinary warriors in all of the poems in question. Thus, according to Tasso, such traits as arrogance and excessive pride account for the fact that tyrants can frequently possess «natural virtues», but lack «moral» and «heroic» ones, for if it is true that «Tiranno per natura è colui che signoreggia i suoi eguali», it is equally true that «molte fiato i più sollevati misurano i lor meriti con troppo larga misura».<sup>67</sup> This is exactly the case with the Ottoman “Other” as shown in Metello’s, Costo’s and Deimier’s epic, arrogance, excessive pride and ambition being typical of most of the Ottoman warriors as well. A salient example of accentuating the Ottoman «prepotenza» can be found in Costo’s *Vittoria della Lega*. Thus, the prevailing lexemes in the description of the Ottoman assembly on the eve of the battle, are «superbia» and «vanto»: traits in sharp contrast with the humility of Don John of Austria and the Holy League’s warriors: «Non fu il consiglio come fu quello / che i nostri fer, ma di superbia pieno, / quasi certi d’haver con gran macello, / del sangue altrui, l’alta vittoria in seno».<sup>68</sup>

<sup>65</sup> TASSO, *Il Forno, ovvero della Nobiltà*: 54.

<sup>66</sup> Probably with the exception of Bolognetti’s poem that focuses entirely on Selim’s devotion to *otium* and his submissive attitude. The above-said is still valid for Ali Pasha and other Ottoman warriors who tend to combine admirable bravery with excessive fury, cruelty and ferocity.

<sup>67</sup> *Ivi*: 65.

<sup>68</sup> COSTO, *La vittoria della Lega*, IV 18: 45.

It is important to stress that the Ottomans are on the whole represented as valiant warriors, yet their valour remains a «natural virtue» being dictated exclusively by such affects as hatred, desire for power and glory and not by «l'honesto semplicemente». <sup>69</sup> From this perspective, the authentic *virtus* proves to be incompatible with both dishonesty («l'oggetto della virtù è l'honesto, e il vero honesto») <sup>70</sup> and immoderation («la virtù heroica e l'incontinenza non si possono accoppiare», according to the author of *Il Forno*). <sup>71</sup> In this way, the valour of the Ottoman adversary, although often admirable, cannot be viewed as a «heroic virtue»: even if the last one implies the presence of strong affects, nonetheless it should in no way be guided by them: «ella [virtù heroica] non è vinta dagli affetti, ma governa loro, e regge a suo modo, e in questo è differente dall'incontinent». <sup>72</sup> As will be shown below, in the case of the Ottoman “Other”, such immoderate passions as arrogance, <sup>73</sup> fury or excessive anger seem to go hand-in-hand with military valour, the last one being definitely shown as a «natural» rather than a «moral» or «heroic» virtue. It is important to emphasize that the theme of excessive affects is closely linked to the dimension of the “demonic marvellous”: the demons, constantly displaying their ambiguous nature («immortali come gli dei ma sottoposti alle passioni come gli uomini») <sup>74</sup> and being subject to all kinds of «impure» passions, seem to contaminate their Infidel allies with anger, fury, greed for power and other «passioni smodate». <sup>75</sup>

Along with sharing with the demons their violent passions and affects, the Ottoman “Other” often shares their physical characteristics too. Thus, in Metello’s *Marte*,

<sup>69</sup> TASSO, *Il Forno, ovvero della Nobiltà*: 66-67.

<sup>70</sup> Ivi: 67.

<sup>71</sup> Ivi: 69.

<sup>72</sup> Ivi: 78.

<sup>73</sup> Thus, in Costo’s poem, the narrator comments upon the total lack of humility displayed by the Ottomans during the military assembly: «Non ragion, ma superbia ha qui 'l suo seggio» (COSTO, *La vittoria della Lega*, IV 22: 45). Notable examples of the “Other’s” self-assurance verging on the absurd are offered by Pierre de Deimier in his *Austriade* (DEIMIER, *L'Austriade*, II: 148; III: 157). The figures of Brahim and Deli Soliman, eagerly denigrating the perished Holy League’s warriors with their «inhumaines bravades» (ivi, II: 49) and arrogantly defying the Christian army or even the Christian God, constitute an emblematic example of the «smoderanza» of strong affects definitely «winning» over reason, military valour and respect for the adversary strictly implied by the chivalric code.

<sup>74</sup> BAFFETTI 2017: 53.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*.



«l'horrido Regnator dei centri oscuri» contemplates the inferior demons («tanti horribil mostri») with his «horribil occhio» as he intends to destroy the Christian world with his «furore». <sup>76</sup> Describing the Demon's appearance, Metello stresses a particular detail, i.e. the fierce eyes reflecting his intense fury: «Nel così dir, fur gli occhi torvi accesi, / d'una fiamma, fra lucida e oscura». <sup>77</sup> The oxymoronic description of the ferocious look of the Devil unfailingly provokes «gran spavento, horribile e profondo» <sup>78</sup> with his inferiors. His spouse Hecate – «la crudel Megera» – produces an equally horrible impression, being described as «diforme», the topical motive of chaos and formlessness proper to the representatives of absolute evil thus coming forth along with other typical diabolical features: «Era diforme, d'empia faccia e nera / col Crin di serpi intorno al capo avolto». <sup>79</sup>

The horrid appearances of the demonic couple, as well as the terror aroused in the “spectators” find an exact equivalent in the description of the fearsome Ottoman sultan Selim who, similarly to the Demon, horrifies his ministers with a fierce glance: «[...] e si spaventi / al vivo foco de' suoi lumi ardenti». <sup>80</sup> It should be noted that the semantic area of the destructive fire becomes a motive repeated throughout the poem, linking the demonic dimension to the historical one. Thus, the motive of the destructive flame merges the diabolic and the Ottoman dimensions as it first appears in the Demon's desire to make «il Mondo arder [...] col *suo* furore», <sup>81</sup> to re-emerge in the diabolic «occhi torvi accesi d'una fiamma» and the «vivo foco» of Selim's «lumi ardenti», <sup>82</sup> finally culminating in the firm «certezza dell'incendio de' barbari furori» <sup>83</sup> announced by the Christian Commander-in-chief.

<sup>76</sup> METELLO, *Il Marte*, I: 4.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>79</sup> *Ivi*, I: 5.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>81</sup> *Ivi*, I: 4.

<sup>82</sup> *Ivi*, II: 8.

<sup>83</sup> *Ivi*, III: 15. The same syntagm «barbari furori» is encountered in the final episode of Canto IV of Costo's *Vittoria della Lega* when the narrator draws the conclusion of the battle: «[...] ch'era il Thrace furor già spento e casso» (COSTO 1582: 56). The syntagm, with a slight variation («barbaro furore»), can be found already in Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (XXXIII 12, 4).

The above-mentioned «barbari furori» constitute another fundamental motive in all of the above-mentioned texts, being closely related to the theme of «passioni smodate». Thus, in *Il Marte*, similarly to the previous example, the motive of fury is firstly introduced in relation to the inhabitants of the demonic world and is later on repeated to become one of the chief characteristics of the Ottoman sultan and his warriors. As Mars «s'accende di furore e sdegno»,<sup>84</sup> his pathos is subsequently echoed by similar affects characterizing the Ottoman warriors who are «governati» by insatiable «rabbia» and whose «furore» on the battlefield «trapassa il ferro»<sup>85</sup> of the Christian knights provoking «strepito» and «terrore». The affect of blind fury becomes a *Leitmotiv* in the poem: «Il gran Signor de' giri tenebrosi»,<sup>86</sup> the belligerent Mars, the fearsome Selim, the «furibondi» Ottoman warriors – all of them share the same affects of fury and anger that enflame them to wage war.

The motive of fury and anger plays a crucial role as well in Francesco Bolognetti's *Vittoria maritima*. Here, the affect of fury merges the figures of the «empio infernal Sathan perverso e rio» who «non resta mai di rabbia e d'ira ardente / d'assalir, d'ingannar l'umana gente»,<sup>87</sup> and the «empio Turco, e temerario tanto [...], / non satollo anchor di sangue»,<sup>88</sup> putting the historical and the allegorical enemy on the same level, the former literally conveying his fury to the latter. Furthermore, the lexemes «rabbia» and «ira» are adopted to refer to the mission of the Christian heroes consisting in winning the resounding victory against «l'ira, e la rabbia, e l'infernal veneno / de gli empii Thraci».<sup>89</sup> The emphasis, significantly enough, is put on the allegorical aspect of the Holy League's

<sup>84</sup> The affect of contempt («sdegno») marks as well the lack of respect shown by the Ottoman warriors who underestimate the power of the Christians: when the Ottoman fleet makes its first appearance, «[...] par che tutto il mondo sprezzis e sdegnis» (METELLO, *Il Marte*, III: 15). Such characteristics of the Turkish knights as «superbo» and «altero» constantly reappear, continuing the motive of the haughtiness of the «Inimico altero» (ivi, III: 14; IV: 22) and echoing the «superbia» of the infernal forces. For the syntagm «l'altero inimico» adopted by Ariosto in his Sonetto XXX, see ARIOSTO, *Opere minori*: 307.

<sup>85</sup> METELLO, *Il Marte*, III: 16.

<sup>86</sup> Ivi, I: 4.

<sup>87</sup> BOLOGNETTI, *La Christiana vittoria maritima*, I 4: 3.

<sup>88</sup> A similar description is used to introduce the Ottoman sultan, the «rio Selim, non mai satollo / del christian sangue» (ivi, I 23: 6). The epithets «empio» and «rio» are used throughout the poetic text to designate both the Demon and the Ottoman adversary.

<sup>89</sup> Ivi, III 114: 56.

naval triumph: defeating the hostile fleet implies a victory over the affects of fury and anger the adversary inherits from the demonic dimension or, in other words, a victory over the diabolic forces.

The affects of «rabbia» and «furore» are affects that prevail also in Tommaso Costo's poem. As in the case with Metello, the Neapolitan poet first introduces the lexemes in question in relation to the demonic universe («l'infernal Pluton», «l'ira di Pluton», «l'Inferno a gran furor si move»),<sup>90</sup> subsequently resorting to them to characterize the Ottoman "Other" («il Thrace furor»).<sup>91</sup> The demonic characteristic of rage is first transposed to his servant, the personified mythological wind («fiero, sì orribil l'African vento», «l'irat'Africo crudele»),<sup>92</sup> whereas the devil's impiety and cruelty seem to be similarly absorbed by the topical allegorical figure of «l'empia Discordia» or «la Discordia crudel»<sup>93</sup> sent to sow dissension into the Christian camp.

The image can be traced in Deimier's *Austriade* as well, rage and anger being shown as typical traits of the Ottoman warriors whose «vaillance» is rarely accompanied by prudence, in most cases going hand-in-hand with «bouillonnante»<sup>94</sup> rage. The affects ascribed to the Barbarous "Other" can be considered as "demonic" only in an implicit way, no infernal spells being cast to favour the Ottoman victory. Moreover, the narrator demonstrates that the affect of blind fury may sometimes impede the warrior to continue the battle: «[...] le Turc tout bouillant de fureur et d'audace / abandonnait soudain ce combat et ce lieu, / tant l'aveugle fureur l'agitait, / et s'en allant ailleurs exercer son vaillance [...]».<sup>95</sup> Similarly, the affect of fury might deprive the warrior of his sensibility thus proving fatal on the battlefield as indeed happens to the brave Deli Eboubequir: «Toute-fois la fureur qui le rend toujours fort, / l'engarde de sentir qui le nuit plus fort [...]».<sup>96</sup> It is interesting to mention an affinity between Deimier and Metello, as far as the representation of the Ottoman "Other" is concerned: as has been shown above, the Italian poet puts

<sup>90</sup> COSTO, *La vittoria della Lega*, III 29: 30.

<sup>91</sup> Ivi, IV 12: 44.

<sup>92</sup> Ivi, III 69: 35.

<sup>93</sup> Ivi, III 73: 39.

<sup>94</sup> DEIMIER, *L'Austriade*, «Argument»: 2.

<sup>95</sup> ID., *L'Austriade*, I: 38.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibidem*.

special emphasis on the «vivo foco» of the sultan's «lumi ardenti», the same metaphor of the flame being adopted by Deimier to describe the ferocity of the sultan's glance, clearly evoking the infernal dimension: «Ses yeux iettaient les feux, et son cruel visage, / horriblait ses regards, de sueur et de sang [...]».<sup>97</sup> The diabolic characters being absent in the French epic, the detail of the flaming eyes is still reminiscent of the infernal dimension, the image of the «inhuman» Ottoman warrior clearly acquiring demonic connotations.

As far as Tommaso Costo's poem is concerned, the diabolic forces and the Ottoman adversary display similar arrogance and fury, the author paying particular attention to another crucial characteristic, i.e. the one of deceitfulness. The «Re Infernal»<sup>98</sup> is described as «altier»,<sup>99</sup> «empio e ostinato»,<sup>100</sup> as well as «maligno e fiero»,<sup>101</sup> the narrator particularly stressing his «gran malitia e falsitate» in stark contrast to the dignity of the «prudente Capitan»<sup>102</sup> of the Holy League's fleet. The Ottoman warriors seem to share the characteristic in question: thus, they tend to fight «astutamente»,<sup>103</sup> adopting different strategies in order to mislead their adversary.

As pointed out by Remo Ceserani, literary projections of the figure of the “Stranger” tend to privilege the aspects of “otherness” resorting to the «repertorio retorico di creazioni retoriche e grottesche» and frequently opting for «tratti mostruosi, bestiali, diabolici».<sup>104</sup> The hostile image of the “Other” is indeed often endowed with “monstruous” features borrowed from the images of wild animals: lions, dragons, boars, wolves, snakes and other fearsome creatures traditionally associated with the demonic world.<sup>105</sup> According to Erasmus of Rotterdam, the figure of the «tyrant» reveals itself to

<sup>97</sup> Ivi, I: 39.

<sup>98</sup> COSTO, *La vittoria della Lega*, III 89: 38.

<sup>99</sup> Ivi, II 28: 30. Same or similar epithets are used in relation to the Ottoman adversary: «Barbaro superbo», «il Thrace altier», «superbi Sciti», etc.

<sup>100</sup> Ivi, III 90: 38.

<sup>101</sup> Ivi, III 38: 33. Cfr. similar references to the hostile armata like «quello stuol maligno e fello» (ivi, IV 107: 54) echoing the characteristics of the Devil.

<sup>102</sup> Ivi, III 57: 35.

<sup>103</sup> Ivi, IV 90: 53.

<sup>104</sup> CESERANI 1998: 8.

<sup>105</sup> «La natura ibrida di uomo e di bestia è [...] elemento tradizionale dell'iconografia diabolica [...]» (BAFFETTI 2017: 57).

be particularly well-suited to absorb such animalesque connotations, being motivated by the affect of fierce hatred that by far exceeds the cruelty of beasts:

Se invece cerchi nel mondo naturale l'immagine del tiranno, pensa al leone, all'orso, all' lupo o all'aquila, che vivono di ferocia e di saccheggio [...]. Sennonché il tiranno supera persino la loro crudeltà. A ben vedere, i serpenti, i leopardi, i leoni e gli altri animali che sono temuti per la loro ferocia si astengono dall'aggre-dire i propri simili [...]. Il tiranno, al contrario inferisce dall'uomo sugli altri uomini, da cittadino sugli altri cittadini.<sup>106</sup>

The above-said turns out to be particularly true in the case of the poetic representations of the Ottoman “Other” whose tyrannical and ferocious nature is often endowed with bestial features. Thus, in his *Vittoria Maritima*, Francesco Bolognetti tends to refer to the Ottoman Empire as to the «Mostro Oriental»,<sup>107</sup> the «Mostro fero»,<sup>108</sup> or the «Mostro atroce».<sup>109</sup> It is essential to note that the “monstrosity” of the adversary tends to be interiorized, the poet referring to the excessive torbid affects of rage and fury, as well as to such characteristics as hypocrisy, dishonesty, the inclination to deceive and betray the enemy, as shown in the canto dedicated to the siege of Famagusta.<sup>110</sup> It is not by chance that the lexeme «Mostro» turns up in the most tragic episode of the poem narrating the murder of Captain-General Marcantonio Bragadin. The messenger bringing the ominous news implores the Christian army to intervene and defend the inhabitants of Cyprus: «Difendi, o Signor mio, l'humil tuo gregge [...] / dal Turca, l'inferral Mostro in corpo humano [...]»,<sup>111</sup> the Ottoman “monstrosity” thus being explicitly inscribed into the infernal dimension.

<sup>106</sup> ERASMO, *L'educazione del principe cristiano* [Canfora]: 81.

<sup>107</sup> BOLOGNETTI, *La Christiana vittoria maritima*, II 85: 8.

<sup>108</sup> Ivi, III 140: 61.

<sup>109</sup> Ivi, II 4: 38. The same syntagm of the «Mostro atroce» was adopted by Bolognetti in Canto I of the poem in relation to «Sathan rio» (ivi, I 8: 5).

<sup>110</sup> Ivi, III 142-144: 60-61.

<sup>111</sup> Ivi, III 148: 62.

To provide an example from Metello's *Marte*, the Devil describes the Ottoman Turks introducing the zoomorphic simile of the lion, the image being perfectly in line with the traditional characteristics ascribed to the impious adversary: «quei c'han par a i Leon forza e vigore, / corpo feroce, e di possanza fiera, / et l'animo superbo, e d'alma altera».<sup>112</sup>

Other salient examples come from Francesco Bolognetti's text, the poet offering the image of a wild animal – a fierce boar («Cinghiale») – to refer to the Grand Admiral in command of the Ottoman fleet. The frantic ferocity of the Ottoman hero is accentuated by a number of zoomorphic features, the extremely vivid portrayal clearly emanating blind fury and provoking terror with the witnesses of the battle:

Come Cinghial fuor de la selva spinto  
[...]  
Di fuor le sete arriccìa, e dentro arrabbìa,  
disposto, pria qu'ivi rimanga estinto,  
d'insanguinarsi le spumanti labbia;  
si drizza ove più son le genti strette,  
e geme, e frende, e sprezza archi, e saette.  
(III 30: 42)

In a similar way, Tommaso Costo stresses «l'infuriato aspetto» of the commander of the left flank – «il fiero Alucciali» – who fights «qual feroce Orso da gran calca stretto»,<sup>113</sup> while another ferocious warrior, «di rabbia ardente» and inflamed with «furor» is compared to «un Libican Serpente»,<sup>114</sup> the image clearly echoing the motive of the Turks being incited to the war by «l'ira del Serpente antico».<sup>115</sup>

Fewer zoomorphic metaphors linking the Ottoman “Other” to the infernal forces can be found in Deimier's epic, the demonic dimension being present in the poem in a rather implicit way. However, the narrator adopts the same image of «un Loup

<sup>112</sup> METELLO, *Il Marte*, I: 4.

<sup>113</sup> COSTO, *La vittoria della Lega*, IV 124: 56.

<sup>114</sup> Ivi, IV 114: 55.

<sup>115</sup> Ivi, IV 47: 48.

carnacier»<sup>116</sup> used by Bolognetti in the final episode of *La Christiana vittoria maritima* («Difendi l'umil tuo gregge [...] / da questi Lupi»)<sup>117</sup> to describe the fierce Deli Eboubequir, yet refusing to resort to explicit vituperation encountered in Bolognetti.<sup>118</sup>

The images of the Ottoman warriors being compared to the ferocious Tigers and Dragons can be observed in Bolognetti's epic:

Ma quai Tigri rabbiosi, e i Draghi ferì,  
Contra di loro in fretta i Thraci vanno [...],  
E la ria gente sol di sangue ingorda  
Pian, monte e mar gridando intorno assorda.  
(III 40: 44)

A noteworthy example can eventually be found in the episode narrating the complex transformation of the Christian warriors who, similarly to Ulysses's companions, turn into «varii mostri» and «diverse belve»<sup>119</sup> as a result of the demonic spell:

Et come ogni altro di furore avanzi,  
Di denti, e d'unghie armati, e di veneno,  
Così cangiati d'Adria i saggi figli  
Zanne scoprian, scoprian veneno, artigli.  
(I 85: 17)

The magic metamorphosis affects not only the appearances, but also the demeanor of the Christian heroes<sup>120</sup> as they start displaying the same ferocity and fury intrinsic to the

<sup>116</sup> DEIMIER, *L'Austriade*, I : 39.

<sup>117</sup> BOLOGNETTI, *La Christiana vittoria maritima*, III 148: 62.

<sup>118</sup> It should be noted that in Deimier's epic, the Ottoman Turks are rarely referred to as the "Barbars", as the narrator tends to offer more neutral definitions, such as «les Turcs», «les Mahometains» or «l'Armée Turquesque» (a position different from the one of the narrator in *La Christiana vittoria maritima*). In Bolognetti's poem, the Ottoman "Other" can indeed be described as a «Mostro atroce» (I 8: 4), «l'empio e rio Mastino» (III 5: 38) or a «rabbioso Cane» (III 140: 60), the narrator's position is shown to be probably the least neutral of all of the texts brought into consideration.

<sup>119</sup> BOLOGNETTI, *La Christiana vittoria maritima*, I 84: 17.

<sup>120</sup> «[...] et con l'usata lor forma, e figura, / Cangiar costumi anchor, voce e natura» (*ibidem*).

demons and the demonic adversary, thus resembling «Tigri arrabbiati» or furious «Harpie»: «Se prima eran magnanimi, e cortesi, / giusti, prudenti, affabili, e benigni, / fur poi costretti a dimostrar palesi / furor, superbia, e cori empii, e maligni; / rapaci, avari, e d'ingordigia accesi [...]».<sup>121</sup> As can be seen, the identity of the Christian heroes is transformed completely as their moral qualities get reversed acquiring an explicitly Barbarous, bestial and demonic character.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The demonization of the “Other” frequently reveals itself to be a projection of stereotypic notions and fears, or, to quote the well-known words of Ingmar Bergman, the projection of those interior demons who are «innumerable, arrive at the most inappropriate times and create panic and terror». To paraphrase Ezio Raimondi, it is probable that epic poetry «becomes a prison, or a mask that at the same time reveals and disguises the face»<sup>122</sup> of the “Other”. Already in Tasso the presence of the “meraviglioso demoniaco” occupied a crucial place in the «edificio» of his epic, representing not only the antagonistic infernal dimension, but also the interior “demons” or «l’inquietante estraneità»<sup>123</sup> tormenting the restless «peregrino errante». Similarly, in the context of the poems on Lepanto, constant explicit and implicit demonic presence revealed at both the allegorical and the historical level appears to closely correlate with the intolerance, fears and panic in front of another *civilitas* clearly perceived as an imminent threat. Things have changed since Ariosto amused himself with making his heroes eagerly interchange their respective religions: poems inspired by the atmosphere of modern “Crusades” clearly show that, on the whole, the identity of the adversary loses its flexible character, in a number of cases acquiring a more static form while being frequently demonized, i.e. identified with the demonic dimension in an explicit or an implicit way. The “Other” might be admired for his valiance, military art and prestige, yet even his valiance proves to be dictated by a different (inferior)

<sup>121</sup> Ivi, I 83: 16.

<sup>122</sup> RAIMONDI 2008: 168.

<sup>123</sup> Ivi: 142.



kind of *virtus* as compared to the Christian adversary. From now on, the poets tend to set boundaries – a clearly defined *nec plus ultra* – for the “Other’s” actions and evolution in the narrative space of the poem. Importantly enough, various representations of the “Other” tend not to be simplified, the poets adopting a rich variety of modalities of representing both the «Ottoman valour»<sup>124</sup> and the demonic features of the adversary. Yet, to borrow once again Calvino’s metaphor, white and black pieces on the ‘chessboard’ of the epic poem (black by definition being the colour associated with the demonic sphere) from now on tend to be no longer interchangeable.

<sup>124</sup> METELLO, *Il Marte*, I: 4.

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