Ludovico Ariosto's Lyric Poetry

in the Literary Context of His Time



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Short Abstract

Ludovico Ariosto's Lyric Poetry in the Literary Context of his Time

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This thesis is conceived as a monograph on the vernacular lyric poetry by Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533). It aims to show that, although the *rime* belong to the 'minor works' of the author of the *Orlando furioso*, they nevertheless testify to Ariosto's search for a personal poetics also in the lyric genre.

The thesis is divided into four chapters (with an introduction and a conclusion), each of which focuses on a different leitmotif in the lyrics. Chapter I centres on the self-fashioning of the lyric 'I' in some poems adopting the terza rima and dealing with a typically elegiac theme: the speaker's sorrow at being parted from his beloved. Chapter II looks at the way Ariosto fashions the love relationship; in particular, I highlight (once again) his debts towards the Latin elegy, and the way these debts are intertwined with motifs belonging to the tradition of Petrarchism. Chapter III is concerned with Ariosto's treatment of the *descriptio puellae*; it examines Ariosto's tendency to feature details clearly drawn from life (eschewing the mere repetition of *topoi*) and to praise his beloved's intellectual qualities, not merely her beauty. In the fourth and last chapter, I investigate the treatment of political themes, showing how they coincide with a set of references to members of the Medici family, Ariosto's opinion of whom I try to reappraise.

The purpose of the thesis is to understand the relationship (both stylistic and thematic) between the *rime* and the context of lyric vernacular poetry of Ariosto's time: I show how they are poised between fifteenth-century courtly Petrarchism and a more modern fashion, and furthermore bear the marks of a strong classical inspiration. I provide, where relevant, some comparisons with the *Furioso* and the *Satire*, in order to investigate how the same themes are treated by Ariosto in different poetic genres.

Long Abstract

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This thesis is the first monographic critical reading of the vernacular lyric poetry of Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533). Because of the uneven literary accomplishment displayed in the lyrics, and because Ariosto never authorized their printing, this is the least studied area of his oeuvre. While there have been, also recently, several partial contributions focusing either on specific aspects of the *rime* or offering convincing overall descriptions, these analyses have never been sufficiently detailed. Taking into account this framework, my aim has therefore been to provide a more exhaustive insight into this subject: the key question was to understand the relationship of the lyrics (specifically, their affinities and their distinguishing features) to the contexts of poetry writing both of Ariosto's time and of the preceding generation. At the same time, however, I have also investigated the way the *rime* relate to Ariosto's main works, especially to the *Orlando furioso* and to the *Satire*, in terms of both themes and stylistic choices.

The starting point of my work was to choose what critical text to adopt. Ariosto's lyrics are today still commonly read in Segre's edition (Ariosto 1954), which is an amended version of Fatini's critical edition (Ariosto 1924). These editions, however, are outdated, in that they fail to adopt a strict philological approach; furthermore, their attribution of some poems to Ariosto has recently been questioned. Most importantly, Fatini and Segre did not take into account (as it had not yet been discovered) a crucial witness, the manuscript Vaticano Rossiano 639, which was first examined by Bozzetti in 1985. He proved that the Rossiano was compiled under Ariosto's supervision (probably in the mid or late 1520s) and must be seen as a (soon discarded) experiment in the canzoniere form: it includes forty-eight lyrics, in whose progression a narrative development may be recognized. Bozzetti also proved that the two other main manuscripts of the philological tradition, held by the Biblioteca Ariostea of Ferrara, testify to a later (and once more unsuccessful) experimental foray in this direction. Moving from Bozzetti's discoveries, in her unpublished doctoral thesis, Finazzi elaborated a new critical edition of the *rime* (Finazzi 2002-2003). Despite its limited accessibility, in consideration of its seminal importance, it is from this edition that I have decided to quote the text and the numbering of the *rime* (an appendix provides the conversion between its numbering and that of Segre's edition).

These and other philological matters are outlined in the Introduction. Here I also provide further information and some questions which I believe should be posed prior to any analysis of the poems. First of all, I re-examine an issue that has become something of a critical commonplace, namely the adhesion of Ariosto-the-lyric poet to the stylistic trend of late-Quattrocento courtly poetry. To this purpose I examine the structure of the Rossiano on the basis of a set of parameters recently established by Comboni and Zanato (Comboni-Zanato 2017) specifically for the description of Quattrocento canzonieri. I should note that apart from this section, the focus on the Rossiano in my thesis is limited:

this provisional canzoniere (and in particular the lexical connectors between its poems) has been at the centre of many recent studies of the *rime*,[1] whereas my approach has been rather aimed at a reappraisal of the lyrics as a whole, also including, whenever possible, the uncollected poems and the juvenilia. This approach also led me to reconstruct (something I also do in the Introduction) the cultural context in which Ariosto started writing his vernacular poetry, and the intellectual milieu with which he shared contacts in the very early part of the Cinquecento. Finally, I pose here a question that will constantly hover in the background of the subsequent chapters: namely, to what extent were the lyrics composed by Ariosto, a courtier of the Este family, influenced by the court environment? This issue presents several different aspects. First, one may ask if the poems ever enjoyed any actual fruition at court: I show that some lyrics were certainly designed to be read (or sung) at court; it is also possible that other poems, which Ariosto later retrieved for his canzoniere, had a similar origin. Another important point that I raise in the Introduction is the influence on the lyrics of what may generally be called courtly culture, i.e. the issues and themes most discussed at court and echoed in contemporary treatises: this theme recurs throughout the first three chapters of my thesis.

The Introduction is followed by four chapters (plus a brief conclusion), each of which centres on a different leitmotif in the *rime*. The chapters may be further grouped in two pairs, with the analysis of the lyric subject and of its self-fashioning prevailing in I-II, and taking a more secondary place in III-IV.

Chapter I takes its moves from the pervasive presence in the *rime* of elegiac motifs. In particular, I dwell on four poems which perfectly exemplify the vernacular elegiac genre and which share two significant features: they are written in terza rima (a form privileged by Ariosto); and they focus on the speaker's grief for the separation from his beloved caused by a journey. Both aspects are worth noting, in that they encourage comparisons between Ariosto and the Quattrocento elegy: in this tradition, the capitolo in terza rima was regarded as the form most suited to convey elegiac contents; as for the theme of distance, this was of course widespread in fifteenth-century love poetry as a legacy of the classical tradition. My point is that, while the Quattrocento capitoli constitute the background for the four poems examined here, Ariosto to a certain extent departs from this tradition stylistically, as he eschews its most stereotyped traits and instead tries to link it more clearly to its classical origin. In Chapter I, the four capitoli are also compared to the *Satire* (a comparison authorized by the use they both make of the terza rima) in order to show the difference in the way Ariosto treats moral themes and the motif of distance (in particular, of the distance caused by the need for the speaker to obey courtly duties): this difference is the result of two almost antipodal types of self-fashioning (lyric/elegiac vs. satirical 'I').

Chapter II may be seen as a continuation and an expansion of Chapter I. Here I analyse the fashioning of the love relationship in the *rime*, once again dedicating special attention to the treatment of the lyric 'I'. This is the longest and most complex chapter, something that might be expected given the absolute prevalence of the theme of love in the *rime*, but also given Ariosto's tendency to subtly nuance this theme (this is also visible at a much higher level of accomplishment in the *Furioso*). In this context I also explore how Ariosto employed themes belonging to Latin poetry (both classical and Humanistic). Although these themes may have been mediated by the Quattrocento tradition (including that in the vernacular), Ariosto's outstanding technical skills set him apart from this tradition, and indeed in some cases allow him to achieve a true 'classicizing mould'. This happens, for instance, in the poems with an erotic subject matter; here Ariosto

[1] See especially the contributions included in Berra 2000.

intermingles specific textual borrowings from the classics with a Petrarchan language, sometimes to ironic effect. Another recurrent non-Petrarchan theme is what, to adopt a classical phrase, we may term *servitium amoris*: this was important in Catullus and in the Latin love elegists, and was inherited by the vernacular poetry with elegiac connotations. In his version of this *topos*, however, Ariosto introduces a subtle innovation: the lyric 'I' is no longer entirely subjected to his beloved, and instead holds on to a margin of rationality which allows him to maintain control on the relationship. This variation leads to a substantial modification of the elegiac vision of love: the mood of self-pity and frustration which we customarily encounter in it makes way for a more disenchanted perspective, and the love relationship itself is portrayed as more equal (it is a *foedus*, which both parts should equally abide by, and which ultimately originated in Catullus). Once again, we encounter ironic nuances which may usefully be compared to some passages in the *Furioso*. Related to this is the importance in Ariosto's lyrics of the theme of reciprocated love, which in some cases shines out through a network of symbolic (often mythological) images he employs. It is interesting that this theme features prominently in those lyrics which Ariosto wrote thinking of his companion (then wife) Alessandra Benucci – these are not included in the Rossiano (in which Ariosto almost certainly did not wish Alessandra to feature prominently), but they do appear in the Ferrarese manuscripts –: I argue that in this way Ariosto wished to convey the idea of the happy love bond between himself and Alessandra, and at the same time, give a flavour of verisimilitude to the theme, despite its mythological transfiguration. Overall, the poems displaying an elegiac/classicizing concept of love (albeit one reworked in the manner briefly outlined) outnumber those which closely adhere to the boundaries of Petrarchism. In the latter, however, Ariosto also achieves some original results. In my analysis of these lyrics, I focus on the myth of Icarus, which underlies a number of poems whose subject is the speaker's acknowledgment of his inferiority to his lady. In these, Ariosto was inspired by Neoplatonic thought and was probably influenced by Bembo. In addition to such statements about his own ontological inferiority, one may also find metapoetic statements about the impossibility of adequately praising the beloved. The chapter concludes by analysing the final sonnet of the Rossiano: ostensibly a spiritual poem in which Bembo's influence may be felt, it actually conveys a sense of unrepentance, further confirming the lack of religious afflatus in Ariosto's poetry and its 'down-to-earthness'.

This dual slant towards classicism and towards verisimilitude also emerges from an analysis of the female portrayals in the *rime*, which is the subject of Chapter III. In it I show that the catalogue of female beauties, normalized by Petrarch and Boccaccio, is given special attention by Ariosto from his earliest poems (indeed he took part, ca. 1503, in a poetic *tenzone* on this very subject). Nevertheless, he also reworked it in a variety of ways. For instance, in one case, following the influence of classical models he also integrates naked parts of the body into the canon (this may in turn be compared with two well-known passages in the *Furioso*). In other poems – the most outstanding of which is a canzone in which he recalls how he fell in love with Alessandra – he dwells on female clothes and hairstyles, intermingling the *topoi* with 'realistic' details (which may be compared with female portraits of that time). The most interesting aspect of Ariosto's *descriptio puellae*, however, is the importance he attributes to the woman's non-physical qualities, which he sets against, and indeed declares to prefer to the mere catalogue of her physical beauties: in so doing he elaborates an 'intellectual canon' proper, placing special emphasis on the word 'ingegno'. This fact implies (in this as in the previous cases) a challenging of the typical vernacular *topoi* in the name of classicism; at the same time, however, the influence of the contemporary discussion on woman's nature and place in society may also be detected – a point which I also discuss, through frequent references

to treatises such as Castiglione's *Cortegiano,* as well as through some parallel examples in poetry, particularly by Bembo. The chapter concludes with the analysis of two poems which adopt a female mouthpiece, which is configured as an ideal *donna di palazzo,* perfectly attuned to the rules of the 'courtly game'.

Chapter IV is not concerned with the amorous theme, and stands, therefore, somewhat apart from the main subject of the thesis thus far. My purpose here was to enrich the perspective on Ariosto-the-lyric poet, by looking into his treatment of political themes in the poems which belong to his canzoniere. Such political references are limited, but have in common a concern with the Medici family – the most interesting poems in this respect being two canzoni which commemorate the death (1516) of Giuliano de' Medici, the brother of Pope Leo X, and a capitolo (1519) dedicated to the latter's nephew Lorenzo. In trying to interpret these poems, I faced a number of difficulties (especially in the case of the canzoni, the circumstances of whose composition are unknown). The negative sentiments which Ariosto felt towards the Medici, and in particular towards Leo X, are well known. These had arisen both from the political hostility between Ferrara and the Papal States and from Ariosto's personal experience: indeed, upon Leo X's election in 1513, Ariosto (who had befriended the pope) had hoped to receive ecclesiastical benefices from him (ultimately he succeeded only, and with great difficulty, in obtaining the parish of St Agata). In the *Satire,* where he famously recalls these facts, Ariosto makes a point of specifying that his expectations had vanished very soon; regarding this point, several critics have argued (despite the fact that the *Satire* are generally regarded as overall trustworthy biographical documents) that Ariosto's hopes may in reality have lasted longer than he states in this work – for quite a few more years, in fact. I too subscribe to this position, and it is on this basis that I argue that the 'Medici poems' may testify to Ariosto's desire to maintain good relationships with the family, in the hope of some reward. Most importantly, however, I hypothesize that Ariosto felt the allure of the Tosco-Roman intellectual milieu – which at the time exerted a cultural primacy, and among whose members was Bembo – and that he aspired to have his poetic talent recognized within this circle of literati. Indeed, these poems display some stylistic signs which point to the author's desire to accomplish a high, noble style, for which he took as his models Petrarch (including the Latin Petrarch) and Bembo himself.

The four chapters are followed by a conclusion, in which I sum up the main findings. I argue that Ariosto's lyric experience, while still rooted in fifteenth-century Petrarchism, is characterized by a continuous effort to elaborate a modern style, and strives to intertwine the lesson (in terms of style and contents) of modern authors with a strong awareness of classical sources. Despite its often less than outstanding literary quality, these poems testify nonetheless to Ariosto's attempt to master (and innovate) the devices of the lyric genre: this route runs a parallel course and follows very similar trajectories to that which led him to revivify other literary forms: the satira, the comedy, and the narrative.

Preliminary Note

A complete list of bibliographical abbreviations constitutes part of the Bibliography. However, a preliminary note should be provided now, which may streamline the reading of this thesis. The excerpts quoted from the *Orlando furioso* always include an indication of their collocation in the three editions of the poem, namely, that of 1516 (A), that of 1521 (B), and that of 1532 (C). The text of the lyric poems constituting Ariosto's canzoniere is quoted from the unpublished critical edition by Maria Finazzi (Finazzi 2002-2003), while the uncollected poems are quoted from Giuseppe Fatini's critical edition, with the improvements of Cesare Segre (Ariosto 1954) – I explain this choice in Introduction, 6.

When I refer to manuscript or early printed testimonies of the lyrics, the abbreviations of their call numbers are also borrowed from Finazzi's edition. Here is the explanation of such abbreviations:

C2 = Ravenna, Biblioteca Comunale Classense, Ms. 287

Cp = *LE RIME DI M. LO*|DOVICO ARIOSTO NON | *più uiste, & nuovamente stampate à in=*|*stantia di Iacopo Coppa Modanese, cio è* || SONETTI. MADRIGALI. | CANZONI STANZE. | CAPITOLI, Venezia, [Giovanni Antonio e Pietro Nicolini da Sabbio], 1546.

F1 = Ferrara, Biblioteca Comunale Ariostea, Ms. I 64

F2 = Ferrara, Biblioteca Comunale Ariostea, Ms. I 365

L3 = Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Ashb. 564

Mn = Mantua, Biblioteca Comunale, Ms. G II 14 (792)

P3 = Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Capponi 138 (Palatino 432)

Pc = Piacenza, Biblioteca Comunale Passerini Landi, Pallastrelli 230

Pd1 = Padua, Biblioteca del Seminario Vescovile, Ms. 91

Vb = Isola Bella (Stresa), Archivio Borromeo, ABIB, Scienze, lettere ed arti – Letteratura.Poesia [canz. Ariosto]

Vr = Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rossiano 639

Introduction

0. Preamble

Although the quinquecentenary of the first edition (1516) of the *Orlando furioso* prompted a renewed wave of interest in Ariosto's work as a whole, his vernacular lyric poems are still generally overlooked. This is probably due to a prejudice against their quality – which has been judged to be lower than that of the *Furioso* and the *Satire* – but also to several difficulties that arise in their analysis. Unlike other works by Ariosto, indeed, these poems lack stylistic consistency; moreover, their philological status is not limpid, owing to the almost complete lack of autographs[1] and to the absence of any authorized printed edition.

For a long period, the only critical edition available was that by Giuseppe Fatini (Ariosto 1924), which was then improved by Cesare Segre (Ariosto 1954): this edition however, in which the poems are grouped by metre, does not follow a clear philological method.[2] In the late 1980s, a significant shift took place in the perception of this area of the poet's production, following Cesare Bozzetti's discovery that Ariosto had at some point attempted to arrange his lyrics so as to form a canzoniere (Bozzetti 1985), and thereby proving the existence of an actual lyric project on Ariosto's part. This finding provoked a flurry of scholarly interest in the *rime*: this resulted in the 1999 conference

[1] As a matter of fact, there seems to exist only one autograph testimony, namely, two bifolios including Canzone 50 (**Vb**). The hypothesis of Finazzi 2002-2003, 105 that this may have been authored by Ariosto has now become a certainty (I should like to thank Finazzi for furnishing me with this update).

[2] The *corpus* of this edition consisted of 5 canzoni, 41 sonnets, 12 madrigals, 27 capitoli, 2 eclogues. Following Segre's suggestions, two attempts were made in the direction of a new critical edition: Carlini 1958; Chittolina 1967.

'Fra satire e rime ariostesche' (Gargnano sul Garda), which sought to re-examine Ariosto's 'brief' literary forms, i.e. the *Satire* and, indeed, the *rime*.

Bozzetti's studies were also the basis for the most recent critical edition of the *rime* – or rather, of the lyrics which Ariosto included in his project of a canzoniere –, compiled by Maria Finazzi (Finazzi 2002-2003) and still unpublished.[3] Despite the seminal importance of this edition, there are still doubts (which can be solved only if new documents are found) concerning the chronology of the poems, their original destination and, in some cases, their attribution. This fact has discouraged critics from undertaking studies of a strictly 'literary' nature, which in recent years have been rare,[4] and restricted to the Italian academic scene.

I believe that a monographic study on the *rime* is now necessary for a number of reasons. First, it may do justice to a self-standing poetic project that Ariosto cultivated until the end of his life, and, consequently, may break down the (still deeply rooted) biased view of the *rime* as a repository of expressive solutions that became effective only when introduced into the *Furioso*; secondly, it is hoped that it will lead to new discoveries concerning Ariosto's cultural background and literary relations – a purpose to which not only his 'canzoniere', but also his extravaganti prove important; and finally, it will allow us to establish a twofold comparison between the *rime* and contemporary lyric writing, on the one hand, and other works by Ariosto on the other (the *Furioso* and the *Satire* will be indeed a constant point of reference).

In undertaking this work, I have attempted (as far as possible) to eschew the difficulties deriving from the lack of historical information by focusing instead on Ariosto's stylistic

[3] Before this, another edition of the *rime* was published, edited by Stefano Bianchi (Ariosto 1992), which adopts Segre's text (and provides it with a new commentary). This edition, however, overlooks Bozzetti's acquisitions.

[4] A critical overview of the *rime* has nonetheless been included in recent monographs on Ariosto (Sangirardi 2006; Ferroni 2008). Every other recent contribution will be mentioned where relevant.

choices, and on their possible indebtedness to a particular tradition or to particular authors (adopting an intertextual approach). This does not mean, however, that Ariosto-the-lyric poet will be considered exclusively as a passive member of a tradition: indeed, another focus of my work will be the individuation in the *rime* of original themes, which fully belong to the poet's universe. Sometimes, while these themes may ostensibly differ only very slightly from the tradition, they in fact open up a very different interpretive perspective, revealing Ariosto's distinctive approach to several themes.

1. The history of Ariosto's 'canzoniere'

As I mentioned, it is most often impossible to pinpoint an exact chronology for each of Ariosto's lyric poems. Only for a few of them a *terminus ante quem* or *post quem* can be established. On the other hand, the two phases in which Ariosto tried to rework them in view of a canzoniere can be – and indeed have been – reconstructed.[5]

The first phase is testified by a codex in-8° compiled under Ariosto's supervision, the Vaticano Rossiano 639 (**Vr**); it was first studied by Bozzetti, who established a possible dating to the mid-1520s and also began (but left unfinished) a stylistic commentary on it.[6] This manuscript includes forty-eight poems: many of them are were probably composed especially for this textual context. They are arranged so as to display the inner story of the speaker-lover; on its structure, see below (section 3).

The decoration, elegant but incomplete, that features in the manuscript, suggests that **Vr** was intended as a presentation copy (whose addressee is unknown) and that this project failed, probably because of some copyist's mistakes.

[5] Even before the new philological findings, the fact that Ariosto made a selection of his lyrics had been hypothesized by Bigi 1968, 30-37 who noted that the *corpus* of the main manuscript testimonies was almost identical to the *editio princeps*.
[6] The surviving draft was edited by Claudio Vela (Bozzetti-Vela 2000). On this codex, see Finazzi 2002-2003, 66-69.

Ariosto's next attempt to form a collection of lyrics dates to his last years, and was probably hinted at in an octave added to the 1532 *Furioso*, where he expresses his wish to glorify his beloved lady:

> Pur vo' tanto cercar prima ch'io mora,
> anzi prima che 'l crin più mi s'imbianchi,
> che forse dirò un dì, che per me ancora
> alcuna sia che di sua fé non manchi.
> Se questo avvien (che di speranza fuora
> io non ne son), non fia mai ch'io mi stanchi
> di farla, a mia possanza, gloriosa
> con lingua e con inchiostro, e in verso e in prosa. (*Fur.*, XXVII 124 C)

The two manuscripts that witness this stage, I 64 (**F1**) e I 365 (**F2**), both from the Biblioteca Comunale Ariostea of Ferrara, were supposedly copied from an archetype **F**. In **F1** and **F2**, the selection of the poems is slightly different from that of **Vr**: some poems of **Vr** are not in **F**, while some new ones are introduced in **F** (the total number in **F** is fifty-six). Moreover, in **F** the poems do not appear in the same order as in **Vr**, but are grouped according to their metre: this choice (which means that we do not know if Ariosto had a new plan for the arrangement of the poems) was probably made to simplify Ariosto's process of revision on each poem. As a matter of fact, the text of the poems is here slightly retouched if compared to **Vr**. Moreover, according to Finazzi, **F1** served Ariosto as a clean copy, which would have enabled him carry out further corrections: a process which was probably interrupted by the poet's death.

It is also not known whether the female protagonist of both **Vr** and **F** was intended to be Alessandra Benucci, the woman with whom Ariosto fell in love in 1513 (if we trust the chronological reference included just in one of his lyric poems, Canzone 50) and whom he later married. Some clues, however, seem to bear out Finazzi's intuition that

the figure of Alessandra only emerges from the poems added to **F**.[7] This point will be discussed in Chapter II.

At the **F** stage, too, Ariosto felt that his poems did not keep pace with the new literary waves, and was therefore reluctant to circulate them. We know of this reluctance from a letter written by Marco Pio to Guidubaldo Feltrio della Rovere, apparently after the latter's request for some poems by Ariosto (10 October 1532):

> Cossì li mando queste poche rime dil ditto Areosto, le qualle contra sua voglia e con dificultate ho poste insieme; contra sua voglia, perché non voria che fossero viste, col dire che sono inchorette et che a lui è vergogna che siano viste, né mai da lui ho potuto havere cosa alcuna. Per questo dicho poi con dificultate, perché da più persone mi è stato forza rachorle insieme, […] in fatti son cose già da più tempo composte dal detto Areosto, né poi più mai reviste, che forsi non pareranno a V. Ex.tia di quel sappore che aspetta delle cose sue.[8]

It is a significant document firstly in that it testifies to the intellectual milieu's curiosity for news concerning Ariosto's poetic output, and to the fact that the lyrics did circulate, even against Ariosto's will. We may suppose that at that time he felt the need for a linguistic revision, especially in the aftermath of the publication of the *Prose della volgar lingua* (1525) – which famously spurred Ariosto to make his final corrections to the *Furioso* – but also of Bembo's lyric poems (1530).

As a consequence of this situation, Ariosto never authorized his lyric poems to be printed: this fact is extremely significant if we consider, on one hand, Ariosto's deep awareness about the possibilities opened up by print, and on the other, the boom of the

[7] The first attempt to identify the lyrics dedicated to Alessandra was made by Salza 1914, 44-68. See also Catalano 1930-1931, I, 388-425; Fatini 1934, 120-123.
[8] Catalano 1930-1931, II, 325. The lyrics originally attached to the letter are not extant.

printed *libro di poesia* in the first decades of the Cinquecento.[9] The posthumous *editio princeps* (**Cp**) was published by the Modenese Jacopo Coppa in Venice (1546), on the basis of autographs at that time in the hands of Ariosto's heirs and now lost,[10] and has sixty-two poems (three of which are mistakenly attributed to Ariosto):[11] the fact that these autographs had corrections in the margins means that in **Cp** the textual readings lack consistency and do not belong to a single phase of elaboration. I shall refer to the sum of **Vr**, **F** and **Cp** as 'main tradition'.[12] It should be noted that the internal organization of **Cp** also follows the canzoniere model; the ordering of the poems, however, which is different from **Vr**, was decided by the editor, who based his choices on the model of the lyric collections of those years.[13]

2. The *rime extravaganti*

If the history of Ariosto's 'canzoniere' is difficult to piece together and peppered with unanswered questions, the study of the *rime extravaganti*, i.e. of the uncollected poems that Ariosto did not include in his selections and which have reached us in miscellanies, is even more problematic. These poems have reached us in miscellanies, many of which are manuscript. Some of the poems are encumbered by doubts of attribution: some of them are included in only one witness (and not always a reliable one) or in more than one witness, but with conflicting attributions. In her critical edition, Finazzi carried out a new count of the witnesses and put forward some new hypotheses concerning the attribution of those that were most controversial. The new estimate is of twenty-six uncollected

[9] See Cannata Salamone 1989.
[10] *Le Rime di M. Lo / douico Ariosto / Non piu uiste & nuouamente stampate (1) a instantia di Iacopo Modanese, cio è Sonetti Madrigali / Canzoni Stanze / Capitoli / In Vinegia con Priuilegio del Sommo Pontefice / & del Eccelso Senato Veneto, MDXLVI*. See Fatini 1924, 148-160; Casadei 1992.
[11] These were probably found among his papers (Finazzi 2002-2003, 122-123).
[12] As a matter of fact, the main tradition also includes two further witnesses, **Mn**, which testifies to a stage intermediate between **Vr** and **F** (see Finazzi 2002-2003, 12; 70-72), and **Pc**, which however was recently proven a *descriptus* by Finazzi (in a still unpublished research).
[13] On this point, see Rabitti 2000.

poems, twenty-seven apocryphal and eleven *dubbie*.[14] Finazzi, however, does not provide the text of the *extravaganti* (save for those newly discovered by her), for which Segre's edition remains the most updated.

The reason Ariosto left many poems out of his plan for a canzoniere must have been, in most cases, related to their style. Arguably, they display stylistic features that recall the late-Quattrocento manner, and especially the so-called courtly poetry, i.e. the lyric vogue of the authors of the courts, especially those of the Po valley (Ferrara, Milan, Mantua) but also those of the *area feltresco-romagnola*.[15] As their poems were, in most cases, destined for immediate fruition on the part of court gentlemen and ladies, and were publicly read or sung to the accompaniment of music, they displayed a wide array of witticisms and musical effects; these authors drew extensively if superficially on Petrarch, often amplifying his most typical rhetorical figures such as the antithesis.[16] These formal choices were frequently paired with repetitive and highly formalized love situations. The main model was, again, Petrarch (not only his *Fragmenta*, but also the *Triumphi*); however, an equally important source was the Latin poetry in elegiac couplets.[17] Of course, one also finds those very poets undertaking more 'ambitious' projects, such as canzonieri proper; nevertheless, the *poesia occasionale* was undoubtedly a common practice in those circles (one destined, in Pantani's words, to an 'uso sociale e cortigiano').[18]

[14] Finazzi 2002-2003, 26-30. To the last group we should also add the twenty-three satirical sonnets *In Cosmicum* (Finazzi 2002-2003, 30-31).
[15] On these undercurrents, see Tissoni Benvenuti 1980; Rossi 1980; Santagata-Carrai 1993. Specifically on the reception of Petrarch in Ferrarese court poetry (both in Latin and the vernacular) throughout the Quattrocento, see Pantani 2002.
[16] The features of the genre are illustrated by Rossi 1980 (which especially focuses on Aquilano); Tissoni Benvenuti 1976; Tissoni Benvenuti 1980; Vecchi Galli 1982; Santagata-Carrai 1993; Vecchi Galli 1994; Vecchi Galli 2003.
[17] See the contributions gathered in Comboni-Di Ricco 2003 (and especially Vecchi Galli 2003).
[18] Pantani 2002, 312.

This configuration of love poetry enjoyed great fortune between the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, but gradually dissolved under the impact of Cinquecento Petrarchism: so much so that Mario Equicola, despite being himself a courtly author (he was active in Ferrara and Mantua), in his *Libro de natura de amore* declared his antipathy for the repetitiveness of the elegiac love situations, typical of the 'old-fashioned' courtly style.[19]

Many poems by Ariosto comply with this tradition. A clear example is constituted by five uncollected capitoli (XX-XV ed. Fatini),[20] which exhibit the typical rhythmic and rhetorical patterns derived from anaphorical repetitions and antitheses (emphasis mine):

> *Tu* festeggi in piacere, *ed io* tormento,
> privo di te, che notte e dì ti chiamo:
> però di ritornar non esser lento. […]
> *Tu* vivi lieto *ed in me* abbonda il pianto;
> *tu* altri godi *ed io* te sol aspetto;
> di bianco vesti, *ed io* di negro ho il manto. (capitolo XXI ed. Fatini, 10-18)[21]

Ariosto was certainly well aware that these and other poems were unfashionable and could not be made to serve his ambitions for a modern canzoniere.

3. General features of **Vr**

It may now be useful to return to **Vr** and examine its structure. To this purpose, it is necessary to refer to some critical milestones on the canzoniere form,[22] dedicating special

[19] See Chapter I, 1.
[20] Finazzi 2002-2003, 27-28. The stylistic immaturity of these capitoli, together with XLVI-XLVII (in Finazzi's edition) and others which are now accounted as *dubbi* or *apocrifi*, had also been noted by Bigi 1968, 30-35. See also Tissoni Benvenuti 1976, which analyses the style of Ariosto's capitoli in relation with the Quattrocento tradition.
[21] Among the numerous possible comparisons, see Sasso, capitolo II, 55-60 (emphasis mine): '*Scio, che* levato ho tanto alto la mente / e che non potrò l'impresa seguitare / e che piacer non ha ch'al fin si pente. / *Scio, che* volendo sopra el ciel volare / caddero con ruina al basso fondo, / come Icar fece, e daro nome al mare'.
[22] See at least Santagata 1975; Longhi 1979; Santagata 1979; Gorni 1984, 504-518; Erspamer 1987; Gorni 1989; Zampese 2001; Albonico 2006.

attention to Comboni-Zanato 2017. This volume specifically examines the Quattrocento canzonieri, thus meeting the need to systematize a field of studies which has proved very fruitful in the last decades. It features detailed descriptive entries on the various canzonieri (the word 'canzoniere' having been defined according to a set of parameters that are inherited from the critical tradition, but rendered more flexible, so as to do justice to the great variety of examples found),[23] thereby allowing us to understand the criteria that presided over the organization of 'macrotexts' in the Quattrocento – for instance, regarding 'plot', themes, or in terms of the choice and distribution of the metrical forms (all these points are obviously analysed in relation to the main model, i.e. Petrarch's *Fragmenta*). The volume covers the work of authors that formed the background of Ariosto's lyric development: indeed, one counts several canzonieri composed in Ferrara from 1460 onwards, including those of the Anonimo Costabili, Cornazano, Boiardo, Correggio, and Tebaldeo.[24]

If we try to describe **Vr** according to the parameters adopted by Comboni and Zanato, the following observations may be made (I will especially make comparisons with authors from the second half of the fifteenth century; this corresponds to the two scholars' inclination of keeping a distinction between the first and the second part of the Quattrocento):

1) *Punto α*: a sonnet, characterized by the absence of any repentance, and by the persistence of the amorous sentiment. This sets it apart from *Rvf*, I, likening it, instead, to several fifteenth-century *sonetti incipitari* (see Chapter II, 0).
2) *Punto ω*: a sonnet addressed to God; this also occurs in many Quattrocento canzonieri. See Chapter II, 5.

[23] Comboni-Zanato 2017, X; XVII-XVIII.
[24] Pantani 2002, 358-404.

3) *Articolazioni interne*: no rigid partitions are present in the development of **Vr**; however, there are two recognizable blocks of capitoli ternari (XX-XXXI and XLII-XLVI). This probably harks back to a Quattrocento trend, as some canzonieri of that time 'group' their poems by metre (for instance, the third canzoniere by Cosmico and those by Ceresara, Liburnio, Sasso and Tebaldeo);[25] in other cases, such as Achillini's canzoniere, a series of capitoli interrupts a structure otherwise characterized by a regular alternation of metres (this case is closer to Ariosto's).[26]

4) *Sequenze intermedie*. We shall note these thematic nuclei:

   II-VI: the poet's excessive boldness in love;

   VII-X: the poet's fidelity, and his hope of receiving 'mercede';

   XI-XIII: praises of the beloved;

   XVIII-XXII: expectation, satisfaction, or failure of the amorous encounters (see Chapter I, 1)

   XXIX-XXX: the poet's distance from the lady;

   XXXVIII-XXXIX: the poet's frustration for his unrequited love;

   XLI-XLII: two poems describing sadness: the subject of the former death, that of the latter an illness (see Chapter IV, 2.6)

5) *Testi di anniversario*: absent.

6) *L'"io" lirico*: this coincides almost always with the poet himself, who, sometimes, refers to his court obligations (see Chapter I). Some poems (XXIV, XXVII, XXXVII) adopt a female mouthpiece: this is again in keeping with a trend detectable in late-Quattrocento poems with elegiac connotations.[27]

[25] Comboni-Zanato 2017, XXVI; 217, 257, 377, 538, 582.
[26] Ibid., 9.
[27] See Longhi 1989. The poet's beloved is also the speaker in many of the poems in Sasso's canzoniere (Comboni-Zanato 2017, 539).

7) *Il "tu"*: although a number of poems were written when Ariosto was already in love with Alessandra Benucci, nothing suggests that she is the dedicatee of the canzoniere. It is also possible that Ariosto may refer to more than one woman.[28] The only name that we (indirectly) gather is that of one Ginevra, praised in XII and identified through the juniper *senhal*. In several poems, the woman is depicted along entirely conventional elegiac lines (see point 11), and this is also consistent with the Quattrocento panorama; I should note, however, that Ariosto limits the accusations of betrayal and of 'perfidia' (which were instead popular with other authors, such as Boiardo, Giusto de' Conti or Cornazano)[29] and chooses to portray a more equal relationship (see Chapter II, 2). Other poems celebrate the beloved, in keeping with the Petrarchan tradition, as a superior creature, praising her physical features as well as her *ingegno* (see Chapter II, 3, and Chapter III).
8) *Testi di pentimento religioso*: only XLVIII (the *punto ω*), though the spiritual afflatus it displays is quite peculiar: see Chapter II, 5. The total or almost total absence of religious repentance characterizes many Quattrocento canzonieri.[30]
9) *Testi con destinatari storici*: XLI (to Giuliano de' Medici, adopting the mouthpiece of his wife Philiberte of Savoy); XLIII (to Cardinal Ippolito d'Este).
10) *Isotopie spaziali*: the Garfagnana (XXIX); Florence, the river Po (XXX); Rome (XLI), the Furlo Pass (XLIII); Ravenna (XLV).
11) *Progressione del senso*: it is difficult to identify a clear progression in the plot. It should be stated that the first part of **Vr**, up to XVII, is more respectful of the Petrarchan tradition (being as it is dominated by the praise of the beloved), while starting from XVIII, the non-Petrarchan, and instead classical-inspired, theme

[28] The presence of multiple beloved ladies characterizes several canzonieri of the fifteenth century (ibid., XXXIII).
[29] Comboni-Zanato 2017, XXXIII-XXXIV.
[30] Ibid., XXIV-XXV.

begins to emerge (the same irregularity also applies to several Quattrocento canzonieri). Accordingly, an unstable relationship between the poet and the woman (or women) is visible, and is marked by an alternation of satisfaction and frustration due to sudden moments of coldness on the beloved's part.[31]

12) *Connessioni intertestuali*: there are numerous lexical connectors. They were analysed in Bozzetti-Vela 2000; Comboni 2000, Zampese 2000, Zampese 2012, 79-83 (all these critics agree on their effectiveness) and partly by Rabitti 2000. Cabani 2000 argues instead for their ineffectiveness.
13) *Poesie di poetica* (metapoetic poems): XI, XIII (see Chapter II, 3.3-3.4).
14) *Contenuti non amorosi*: XXVI complains about the illness of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino. XLI intermingles the love theme (Philiberte's love for Giuliano) with encomiastic-political contents (for both poems, see Chapter IV, 2). XLVII is an occasional poem written for a lady, who is not necessarily the poet's beloved.

On the basis of these characteristics, **Vr** may be seen as aligning (belatedly) with the late-Quattrocento tradition. Ariosto would have had no difficulty in consulting the several canzonieri available as printed editions: that by Tebaldeo, for instance, which was probably the most successful (*e.p.* 1498), as well as those by Sasso (*e.p*. 1500), Cornazano (*e.p*. 1502), and Liburnio (*e.p*. 1502).

Other signs, however, point to Ariosto's attempt to follow a more modern fashion. The most evident of these signs is the influence of Bembo – perceivable for instance in the last poem of **Vr**, which is clearly inspired by the final ballata of Bembo's canzoniere (see Chapter II, 5).[32] This canzoniere, however, was first printed in 1530, and philologists have

[31] Ibid., XXVIII-XXIX.
[32] Gorni 1989, 39; Dilemmi 2000, 484.

never clearly stated that **Vr** may post-date it.[33] As a matter of fact, however, Bembo's ballata had already been placed at the end of his first attempt of canzoniere, which was dedicated to Elisabetta Gonzaga and included in the manuscript Marciano It. IX.143 (**VM$_5$**), compiled under Bembo's supervision in 1510-1511.[34] The manuscript testifies to multiple phases in the elaboration of the poems, and includes corrections in Bembo's own hands, which, however, Dionisotti believes, were added much later: according to Donnini, 'non si può escludere che Bembo avesse con sé il ms. in tutti i suoi spostamenti e continuasse a tenerlo presente nell'elaborazione delle rime'.[35] If we compare the structure of **VM$_5$** with that of **Vr**, we will also note other similarities. Bembo's canzoniere is only slightly longer than Ariosto's (59 vs. 48 poems). Both feature only two canzoni, and their collocation within the macrotext is similar: numbers 6 and 51 in Bembo,[36] VI and XLI in Ariosto – furthermore, Ariosto's XLI is openly modelled on Bembo's 51 (*Alma cortese*; see Chapter IV, 2). Finally, the second-last poem of **Vr**, XLVII (*Non senza causa il giglio e l'amaranto*) describes an *impresa* embroidered on the 'sacro manto' worn by a noble 'virgin', which signifies purity and constancy: if we accept the possibility that this lady might be about to enter a religious order,[37] this would be a further element in common with **VM$_5$**, whose penultimate sonnet (*Phrisio, che già da questa gente e quella*) is dedicated to Niccolò Frisio upon his taking the habit.

Whether or not we accept the possibility that **VM$_5$** may have been a source,[38] it is clear that nevertheless **Vr** shares some common traits with the 'old-fashioned' courtly manner:

[33] It is usually dated to the 1520s (capitolo XLV establishing a *terminus post quem* at 1522) on account based on the copyist's handwriting and of the filigree: Bozzetti 1985, 90 (see also ibid., 117).
[34] On this canzoniere, see Vela 1988 and Donnini's notes in Bembo 2008, II, 760-772.
[35] Bembo 2008, II, 768-769.
[36] The numbering is quoted according to Vela's edition of it (Vela 1988).
[37] This interpretation is attributed by Fatini 1934, 114-115 to Salza 1914, 175-176, but I have not found this actually stated in Salza's study. An alternative interpretation, proposed by Fatini (ibid.), who follows two sixteenth-century commentators, Sansovino and Turchi (Ariosto 1730, II, 362), considers the poem to be the defence of a noblewoman whose honour had been stained.
[38] There are no proofs that Ariosto actually viewed the poems in this macrotextual context. Vela 2018, 55, only notes that those texts also had an extravagante circulation, which moved beyond the borders of Urbino.

indeed, Bozzetti described it as 'un'affermazione di fedeltà a quella cultura delle grandi corti lombarde che proprio in quel giro d'anni fu quasi irrimediabilmente travolta dalla storia insieme politica e letteraria'.[39]

This point may be confirmed, first of all, by Ariosto's metrical choices. His predilection for the capitolo in terza rima is most definitely a stand-out feature: there are as many as seventeen capitoli in **Vr** (and twenty-five in the *corpus* as a whole). The capitolo (together with the sonnet) was extremely popular in late-Quattrocento canzonieri:[40] even if the capitoli he included in **Vr** and **F** are clearly more mature in style than the uncollected ones, Ariosto's decision to deploy the terza rima was sufficient to classify his canzoniere as 'outdated'. Suffice it to say that Bembo himself, who in in his youth authored four capitoli, excluded all but one from his canzoniere of 1530.[41] As I said above, at point 3), the layout of the capitoli in **Vr**, which form two compact blocks, also harks back to a fifteenth-century fashion: from the standpoint of a sixteenth-century reader, it probably disrupted the structural soundness of the canzoniere.[42]

The scarce presence of the canzone in Ariosto's lyrics also runs counter to the 'modern', sixteenth-century, Petrarchism. This form was soon to gain the highest renown, once again thanks to Bembo, who, as early as 1507, boosted its connection to 'noble' contents, with his canzone *Alma cortese, che dal mondo errante*, an example of *stile grave*

[39] Bozzetti 1985, 95. On this subject, see also Comboni 2000. Fedi 1976, 284 speaks of a 'zona mediana' between the courtly *koiné* and a mature Petrarchism.
[40] See Comboni-Zanato 2017, XVII. Tissoni Benvenuti 1976, 303-304: 'La massima diffusione della terza rima si ha […] nel secondo Quattrocento, nel periodo aureo della letteratura cortigiana, quando il capitolo si specializza in diversi sottogeneri […] e divide con il solo sonetto la presenza nei più importanti canzonieri'. Scholars have already investigated the tradition of the capitolo, pinpointing, in particular, a widespread moralistic tendency (according to Bologna 1998, 18-19, thanks to the capitolo 'l'inflessione etica dominante nella cultura cortigiana trova un canale in cui scorrere con libera e robusta corrente'), and the differences between its types (Malinverni 1998; Vecchi Galli 2003). As the structure of the capitolo was 'open', it was capable of absorbing several different inputs and contents and could, therefore, present itself in the form of an elegy (see Chapters I-II), of a *visione* (inspired by Dante's *Comedy* and Petrarch's *Triumphi*), an *epistola* (whose ultimate source is Ovid's *Heroides*), a political invective, a bucolic, et cetera.
[41] The only one included there was *Le rime*, 38.
[42] This was noted by Cabani 2000 [2016], 98-100.

that remained extremely influential throughout the century. This poem also inspired Ariosto for XLI and 49; his difficulty in mastering the canzone form, however, is evident (see Chapter IV). Ariosto only wrote three more canzoni, and only one of these (canzone 50) belongs to **F**. As for the other two, one, which bears the hallmark of the courtly style, was transmitted as extravagante (canzone III ed. Fatini), while the other (VI) was included in **Vr**, but not in **F**.

The predominant form in Ariosto's lyric *corpus* is, as may be expected, the sonnet (there are 40 extant sonnets whose attribution is certain). In several sonnets Ariosto also resorts to courtly patterns; a typical example is the concentration of witticism and sententiousness in the last tercet, which resembles an *aprosdoketon*.[43]

Among the 'brief' lyric forms, we should mention the presence in Ariosto's *corpus*, next to the madrigal (6 poems), of as many as six *ballate monostrofiche*. This is an aspect that may be entirely ascribed to sixteenth-century taste:[44] these lyric forms were rarely included in the canzonieri in the previous century, and when they were, they rarely respected the 'metrical rules' set up by Petrarch, and were the subject of experimentation in a variety of guises. Likewise, Ariosto eschews other brief forms that are typically 'quattrocentesche' and non-Petrarchan, such as the *strambotto* or the *barzelletta*.

The style of Ariosto's poetry is, therefore, a hybridized one. But a similar hybridization also invests the contents of his lyrical output, which derive from several cultural strands which he absorbed with equal ease. It seems necessary to introduce this point here by recalling his cultural background.

[43] This feature is analysed (with a focus on Serafino) by Rossi 1980, 79. On the way Ariosto applied it, see Cabani 2000 [2016], 111-115.
[44] For the features of the sixteenth-century ballata, see Castoldi 1993, 254. On the freedom in the use of the two forms in the Quattrocento, see Comboni-Zanato 2017, XVI.

4. Between Latin and the vernacular: the cultural context

The cultural context in which Ariosto grew up expressed itself mostly in Latin. It was Guarino Veronese (who was active in Ferrara from 1429) that made the 'rinascita dell'antico' possible here, by boosting the activity of the Studio and by promoting the knowledge of the classics at court. His legacy variously reverberated through court literature, including the fashion for *volgarizzamenti* and the birth of a classicizing theatre. The writing of vernacular lyric poetry was also influenced by the classics: an exemplary figure is Boiardo, whose lyric compilation (the *Amorum libri tres*) bears the hallmark of his Humanistic culture (also demonstrated by his activity as a Latin poet, as well as translator into Italian of Apuleius, Xenophon, and Herodotus).

Ariosto himself received a humanistic training. His teachers were the humanists Luca Ripa and Gregorio da Spoleto, whom he mentions in his Latin poem IX and in satira VI.[45] Moreover, despite being officially a student of Law, a Latin poem he wrote for the 1495 opening ceremony of the Studio (IV. *De laudibus sophiae*) suggests that he also was able to study Humanities there.[46]

That Ariosto partook in the Ferrarese revival of the classics is first of all reflected by his activity as a Latin poet. His *Carmina*, recently the focus of a new edition by Looney and Possanza, show his command of several metres and poetic forms, from the elegy to the epigram, down to the Horatian ode.[47] His acquaintance with prestigious literary figures may be inferred from the dedications of these poems: Timoteo Bendedei, Alberto Pio da Carpi, Ercole Strozzi, Pietro Bembo. Because many of these poems may be dated

[45] Bigi 1968, 9-12.
[46] Catalano 1930-1931, I, 100-103.
[47] A new critical evaluation of Ariosto's Latin poems may be found in Severi 2018, although Carducci 1936, Bigi 1968, and Paoletti 1976 are still viable.

between ca. 1494 and 1503 (albeit with significant exceptions),[48] and because there is little evidence of such an early dating for his Italian lyrics, it is generally said that Ariosto's activity as a Latin poet preceded that as a vernacular poet. This is, however, contradicted by Ariosto's own account in satira IV, where, recalling his youthful years spent in Reggio, he claims to have been writing 'in più d'una lingua e in più d'un stile' (127).[49] Ariosto's statement would be confirmed if we could prove that the aforementioned uncollected capitoli (and other poems clearly displaying the Quattrocento hallmarks) were also written in the last years of the century; but even lacking such evidence, a bilingual phase in Ariosto's poetic activity may be hypothesized, which paved the way to his final choice of Italian as his main language. It is now important to reconstruct this point of transition.

One of Ariosto's most important acquaintances in those years was Pietro Bembo, who first visited Ferrara in July 1497 with his father,[50] and frequently returned there until 1503. After his love affair with Maria Savorgnan (1500-1501), he turned his interest to Lucrezia Borgia, who had recently married Alfonso d'Este. Pietro had by then started writing the *Asolani* as well as many love lyrics, which were highly indebted to the courtly tradition. But already in those early years he was determined to pursue a renovation of Italian poetry, by experimenting on the Petrarchan lesson and appropriating the doctrine of love imposed by Neoplatonic philosophy (the publication of the *Asolani* in 1505 eventually boosted his popularity as a writer on the subject of love), although at first, he must have struggled to have his Italian poetry acknowledged in the Latin-driven Ferrarese milieu.[51]

[48] The poem with the latest *terminus post quem* is LXIV *In Olivam*, which refers to the garden of the house he bought after 1525.
[49] See also the testimony of Garofalo, one of Ariosto's first biographers, according to which he (even before entering Ippolito's service in 1503) was known, alongside his Latin poems, also 'per alcune rime amorose' (Garofalo 1584, n.p.).
[50] Catalano 1930-1931, I, 142-144; 462-464.
[51] In his epigram *Ad Sempronium* (*Carmina*, XVII), he defends himself against a humanist who apparently reproached his choice of writing in Italian.

The fact that Bembo already knew Ariosto at that time is suggested by the latter's likely involvement as an intermediary in the relationship between Bembo and Borgia.[52] But most importantly, it is suggested by their Latin poetic correspondence, which is grounded in a shared reflection on literature:[53] indeed, Ariosto's elegy *Ad Petrum Bembum* (VII), on the theme of jealousy, answers Bembo's *Ad Melinum* (X), in which the author advised his addressee to show tolerance towards his beloved. This exchange develops under the sign of Propertius: Bembo's elegy imitates Propertius, II 18, which in turn, together with II 34, was also a source for Ariosto.[54]

But this intellectual exchange was not limited to Latin poetry. Indeed, in the early years of the sixteenth century Ariosto took part (with the sonnet *Se senza fin son le cagion ch'io v'ami*,[55] belonging to the uncollected poems) in a vernacular *tenzone* elaborated by the 'Compagnia degli Amici', a Venetian society based on the mutual solidarity and intellectual affinity between a number of young *patrizi*, whose intellectual outlook was clearly influenced by Bembo himself (see Chapter III, 1.1.1). In this *tenzone* (which was discovered by Alessandro Gnocchi), these poets elaborated on Bembo's sonnet *Crin d'oro crespo et d'ambra tersa et pura*: as this was dedicated to Lucrezia Borgia and belongs to Bembo's Ferrarese period, Ariosto's involvement may be explained.

Finally, as was recently demonstrated by Tissoni Benvenuti and Vela, it is possible to detect some influences of the *Asolani* in the *Furioso*, which was being written in those years: these influences, according to Vela, were not passively absorbed, but testify to an ongoing 'dialogue' on the theme of love.[56]

[52] In a letter written to Borgia from Ostellato (24 July 1503), Bembo alludes to one 'Lodovico' who had presented to the Duchess the manuscript of the *Asolani* (Catalano 1930-1931, I, 463). This document, however, is controversial, as we have no evidence that 'm. Lodovico' is actually Ariosto.
[53] Another mention of the two poets together is in Ercole Strozzi's *Venatio* (written before 1500 and set in 1494) in which both are engaged in a hunting trip organized by King Charles VIII (Pavan 2009, 124-125).
[54] Gnocchi 1999, 292.
[55] See Gnocchi 1999, 282-293; the poems can be read ibid., 284-287. See also Vela 2018, 51-52.
[56] Tissoni Benvenuti 2016; Vela 2018, 52-56.

It is difficult to say whether there was true friendship between Bembo and Ariosto. While the latter would (in later years) often pay homage to the former,[57] it looks as if Bembo made a point of hiding all evidence of their acquaintance: the much-investigated 'silenzi del Bembo' (a phrase first used by Zanette) have become an established critical commonplace,[58] so I will not dwell further on this subject. I shall only note that, in his biography of Ariosto, Giovan Battista Pigna reports that Bembo had tried to stop him from starting the *Furioso*:

> Di questa impresa volendo il Bembo levarlo con dirgli che egli più atto era allo scriver latino che al volgare […]; dissegli all'incontro l'Ariosto che più tosto volea essere uno de' primi tra' scrittori toscani che appena il secondo tra' latini […].[59]

Whether true or not, this anecdote is significant in that it portrays the intense intellectual debate that was developing in early sixteenth-century Ferrara.

Another important figure in this context was Ercole Strozzi.[60] A member of a prestigious family, Strozzi was an acclaimed Latin poet (as was his father, Tito Vespasiano) and particularly renowned as a celebrator of Lucrezia Borgia.[61] Around 1508, he converted to the use of the vernacular. This event was probably encouraged by his friend Bembo, who rejoiced on this event by praising Stozzi in a strambotto,[62] and, in

[57] Already in the first *Furioso*, he portrays him in an *ekphrasis* as a celebrator of the Urbino court (*Fur*., XXXVIII 83,7-8 A; XXXVII 86 B; XLII 86 C: 'havea la prima [Elisabetta Gonzaga] a piè del sacro lembo / Iacobo Sadoletto e Pietro Bembo'). Later, he turns to Bembo for protection and literary advice for his son Virginio, in satira VI (1524-1525; see Procaccioli's commentary in Ariosto 2019, 205-230) and in a letter (CLXXV, 1531); finally, in the last *Furioso*, he adds another mention of Bembo, thus paying homage to his reformation of language from which the poem itself had benefited (*Fur*., XLVI 15,1-4 C: 'Là Bernardo Capel, là veggo Pietro / Bembo, che 'l puro e dolce idioma nostro, / levato fuor del volgare uso tetro, / quale esser dee, ci ha col suo esempio mostro').

[58] The most recent contributions on this subject are Procaccioli 2016 and Vela 2018.

[59] Pigna 1554, 74-75.

[60] The most recent biographical account of Strozzi is Guassardo 2019.

[61] Dilemmi 2006, 26-29. Ariosto portrayed him as such, together with Tebaldeo, in *Fur*., XXXVIII 80,8 A; XXXVII 83,8 B; XLII 83,8 C.

[62] *Le rime*, 70. Conversely, the Latin poet Daniele Fini wrote an elegy complaining about the fact; this can be read in Monteforte 1899, 80.

later years, made him the addressee of his precepts for the reformed language in the *Prose della volgar lingua*. Only seven sonnets by Strozzi have survived:[63] his Italian output is also limited because of his death, which also took place in 1508.

Strozzi also befriended Ariosto, who was only one year younger than him. The two probably studied together under Luca Ripa between 1486 and 1489,[64] and it is significant that Giovanni Filoteo Achillini mentions them together, as representatives of the court of Ferrara, in the list of illustrious personages that concludes his *Viridario*.[65] Their friendship is also testified by the reciprocal mentions in their Italian works[66] and by possible reciprocal influences in their Latin output.[67] What matters here, is that for both authors Bembo's presence in Ferrara played a crucial role.

During the years we are examining, Ariosto also started writing the *Furioso*. Another fundamental document should be mentioned with regard to this, namely, the dialogue *Equitatio*[68] by the humanist Celio Calcagnini, datable to around 1507. In this work, which offers a snapshot of the intellectual Neo-Latin milieu of the time, the interlocutors engage in a trip on horseback, during which they speak on a wide range of erudite subjects: among the speakers is Ariosto, who is represented as lamenting (though this must be read as a

[63] They are edited in Vagni 2011.
[64] Catalano 1930-1931, I, 92.
[65] 'Lariosto e Strozzi a cui Phebo col raggio / Mostra la via del fonte Pegaseo' (Achillini 1513, CXCIII*v*). The poem was published in Bologna in 1513, but already finished by 1504.
[66] In his Latin elegy to Ercole, in mourning of Marullus (1500), Ariosto states that they share a similar lack of interest in contemporary affairs (*Carmina*, XV 23-26: 'Nam foret haec [Marullus's death] gravior iactura *mihiqui tibique*, […] quam vidisse mala tempestate (improba saecli / conditio!) clades et Latii interitum'); in turn, Ercole in his *Venatio* (Strozzi 1513, I 22*v*.) depicts Ariosto as 'piger' and 'divisus alio mentem'. After Ercole's death in 1508, Ariosto commemorates him in an epitaph (*Carmina*, LIX 1-2) as 'Qui patriae est olim iuvenis moderatus habenas, / quique senum subiit pondera pene puer'. According to Garofalo, Tito Vespasiano Strozzi delighted in testing the ability of the young Ariosto, and in making him compete with Ercole: Garofalo 1584, n.p.
[67] Ariosto's Latin poem XXXII, about the volatility of love (1-4: 'An Glyceren pluris faciam, plurisne Lycorin, / si, Cherinte, scio dicere, dispeream. / Moribus haec atque haec placet, et placet utraque cultu; / parque illis lepor est, gratia, parque venus') shares features with an epigram by Ercole, including the number of lines (see *Quod duas pariter amet*, 1-4, in Strozzi 1513, I 82*v*: 'An mihi chara Nape magis? An mage cara Neaera? / Chara Nape mihi est, chara Neaera mihi. / Utraque chara aeque est, ipse aeque charus utrique, / illa, vel illa meis charior est oculis').
[68] Calcagnini 1544, 558-590; see now Curti 2016 (an edition of the portion of the text involving Ariosto).

purely literary regret) the fact he has abandoned higher subjects for the 'humble' chivalric poem.[69]

The reference to *Equitatio* has allowed us to introduce another key figure in the Ferrarese milieu, Calcagnini, and, through him, another very popular genre of that period, the Humanistic erudite prose. Calcagnini, a courtier first of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, then of Duke Alfonso, wrote on the most diverse subjects; his treatises and his epistles, however, are informed less by a true scientific passion than by his desire to show off his *vis rhetorica* and his encyclopaedic culture, as well as his fascination for philosophical questions and for esoteric themes.[70] He was an inveterate partisan of Latin: indeed, the way he represented Ariosto in *Equitatio* reveals that his sympathies went to Ariosto-the-humanist (a poem also exists in which he defends the Latin poetry of Ariosto and of Bembo against unnamed detractors).[71]

Ariosto celebrated Calcagnini in the *Furioso;*[72] furthermore, scholars have identified some excerpts of the poem that might have been influenced by his work. The most relevant is the personification of Silence in *Fur*., XIV C (XII AB): this has been related to Calcagnini's pamphlet *Descriptio silentii*, which develops the *ekphrasis* on the god of silence Harpocrates.[73] Despite adopting different strategies of portrayal, the two authors share the same tone, which bears the stamp of the principle of 'serious play'. This is a point of crucial importance: the technique of *serio ludere*/*spoudaiogeloion* was typical of Ferrarese culture, as a result of the spread of the Lucianic tradition stimulated, in particular, by Leon Battista Alberti and practiced, among others, by Leoniceno and

[69] Ariosto adopts the expression 'Gallicanae […] ambubaiae', i.e. French courtesans, to indicate the Muses inspiring chivalric literature (Savarese 1984, 15-37).
[70] On Calcagnini, see Lazzari 1935; Moreschini 1991; Fortini 2000 (specifically on some aspects of his influence on Ariosto); Danzi 2012; Diliberto 2013; Gardini 2017.
[71] Pigna 1553, 200 (*In detractorem*),3-4: 'At solet et Bembo atque Ariosto assurgere Phoebus, / increpuit quoties ille vel ille Chelyn'.
[72] 'Il dotto Celio Calcagnin' features in the *ekphrasis* of the fountain at *Fur*., XXXVIII 87,5-8 A; XXXVII 90 B; XLVI 90 C.
[73] See Chapter III, 4.2-4.3.

Collenuccio.[74] As for Ariosto, he was pervasively influenced by this genre, in the *Satire* (see Chapter I) but also in the *Furioso*, some episodes of which (such as Astolfo's journey to the moon, or the episode involving Discordia) are recognizably indebted to the Lucianic tradition and particularly to Alberti.[75]

Finally, Ariosto's fondness for philosophy and for the erudite subjects fashionable in that milieu are documented: he took an interest in Neoplatonism and studied the works of Marsilio Ficino, a copy of which he requested in a famous 1498 letter to Aldus Manutius.[76]

Throughout this work, I will be constantly referring to and examining the cultural framework underlying Ariosto's formation, which I have here briefly outlined by considering some key personalities.

5. Ariosto as court poet?

As the elements outlined so far suggest, the courtly culture of Ferrara exerted a deep influence on Ariosto. This prompts one of the key questions of this thesis, namely, how does his lyric output relate to the court patronage system.

As is known, writing poetry was not what he was employed for. While he was probably involved in the organization of theatrical representations in 1497, as a paid employee of Duke Ercole I, his later court services obliged him to undertake a variety of tasks: in the service of Cardinal Ippolito (1503-1517), he had to carry out diplomatic missions, while during his service of Duke Alfonso, which began in 1518, he acted as Ducal commissioner in Garfagnana for three years (1522-1525).[77] These duties, which he

[74] On Alberti's influence on Ferrarese culture, see Tissoni Benvenuti 2007 (267: 'La cultura ferrarese sembra essere più di altre in consonanza con l'Alberti; o forse potremmo dire che è una cultura quasi predisposta a capirne e continuarne lo spirito'); D'Ascia 1998.
[75] See Martelli 1964; Segre 1966, 85-95; Ferroni 1974; Pampaloni 1974.
[76] *Lettere*, 1. On Ariosto's Platonism, the most recent contributions are Dell'Aia 2013; Dell'Aia 2017.
[77] On Ariosto's duties at court, see Catalano 1930-1931, I, 204-206; 476-478; 535-546.

resented, as famously recorded in the *Satire*, nevertheless were necessary, as, coming from a family belonging to the minor aristocracy, he could not subsist on his meagre feudal revenues.

There is no evidence that Ariosto was ever rewarded by the Estensi specifically for his poetry, but we do have evidence that he wrote poetry for the amusement and the celebration of them (in addition to the *Furioso*).[78] Among the celebrative works we should mention the *Obizzeide* (ca. 1503), a failed epic experiment on the feats of Obizzo d'Este (an ancestor of the lords of Ferrara),[79] as well as the Latin epithalamium on Alfonso d'Este's marriage to Lucrezia Borgia (*Carmina*, LIII; the wedding took place in 1502, the year before Ariosto officially entered Ippolito's service). The comedies, which, as is well known, were a favourite entertainment at the Ferrarese court (*La Cassaria* and *I Suppositi* were staged in 1508 and 1509 respectively) fall instead under the rubric of works created for the purpose of amusement.

It is likely that also several *rime* were conceived for the court and were initially circulated there. Some are included in a large number of manuscript miscellanies; for instance, the sonnet for Ginevra (see above), and capitoli XXI and XXIII: all of them also feature in **Vr**, but in a reworked version, which, in the latter two cases, is significantly different from the earlier one. Manuscript miscellanies were extremely popular at the court of Ferrara in the late Quattrocento and throughout the Cinquecento.[80] They gathered lyrics of diverse quality (poems by Bembo sit next to more stereotyped poems): these were often publicly read,[81] and many were meant to be accompanied by music, an art

[78] On this point, see Menegatti 2017, 52-53.
[79] On the *Obizzeide*, see Casadei 1993, 23-34.
[80] See Tissoni Benvenuti 1989, Vecchi Galli 1994.
[81] While discussing on Tebaldeo, Vincenzo Calmeta claimed that his poems felt quite different in their printed version compared to when they were 'sung or recited' (Calmeta 1959, 15-19).

which the Estensi particularly appreciated (see the case of Serafino Aquilano, probably the most famous court poet of the time and also a renowned musician).[82]

We now know that Ariosto also wrote poetry for music; this is thanks to Finazzi's discovery of a dialogic capitolo (a configuration typical of this poetry; in this case the dialogue is between Love and a woman)[83] included in a 1510 collection of music printed by Andrea Antico, the most important music publisher of the time:[84]

> [D.] – Amor! [A.] – Che vòi? [D.] – Ragion. [A.] – Da cui la vòi?
> [D.] – Da te. [A.] – Tu non l'harrai. [D.] – Perché la neghi?
> [A.] – C'haver quel che non ho da me non pòi.
> [D.] – Dammi consiglio ove rivolga i prieghi!
> [A.] – Consiglio di fanciul saria legiero.
> [D.] – Ah, Signor mio, per me pietà ti pieghi! (*Rime*, (1),1-6)

The poem's main virtue certainly did not reside in the text (whose quality is low) but in the music: the score (for soprano and tenor) was composed by Bartolomeo Tromboncino, a musician much in demand – between 1511 and 1513 – at the courts of Ippolito d'Este, of Lucrezia Borgia and of Isabella d'Este.[85] In this light, the capitolo-dialogue further proves that Ariosto was part of the circuit of production and consumption of courtly poetry.

Another poem clearly destined for a court audience is the extravagante dramatic eclogue *Dove vai Melibeo, dove sì ratto* (eclogue I ed. Fatini). Its subject, hidden under the pastoral veil, is the plot of Don Giulio and Don Ferrante d'Este against their brothers,

[82] La Face Bianconi-Rossi 1999 is an edition of the lyrics by Serafino for which a musical accompaniment is known. On music at the Ferrarese court, see also Tissoni Benvenuti 1980, 164; Vela 1989; Prizer 2004.
[83] Finazzi 2002-2003, 321-322 (but Vecchi Galli 2000, 359-360, had already called attention on this poem).
[84] *Canzoni nove con alcune scelte de varie libri di canto*, Roma, per Andrea Antiquo de Montona, 9 ottobre 1510, ff.24-25; see Vecchi Galli 2000, 360 footnote 20; Einstein 1951, 336-339 (reproducing the soprano and tenor parts of this poem, also with a modern notation). The poem is otherwise testified only by manuscript **Pd1**.
[85] Tromboncino also set to music an octave from the *Furioso* (XXI 126 AB; XXIII C). According to Dorigatti 2011, 22-27, he set to music an earlier authorial version of it (the scholar, therefore, dates the musical score before 1516, although it was first printed in 1517). Casadei 2016, 138-139 suggests instead that Tromboncino himself adapted the octave to his musical needs.

Alfonso and Ippolito (1506).[86] The slanderous way in which the guilty party are described leads us to think that the poem was written after the plot, but before the convicts' punishment: that is, before Alfonso's 'moderate' judgement (life sentence for both) had made it inappropriate. While the dating is clear, the exact reason Ariosto wrote this poem is difficult to understand. On the one hand, it seems that Ariosto wanted to please Ippolito, endorsing his views (so much so that Bacchelli accused him of 'machiavellismo');[87] on the other, some details are omitted which would have served to further glorify the cardinal (most notably, Ippolito's role in discovering the plot).[88] Nevertheless, the courtly destination of this poem is suggested by the fact that the dramatic eclogue was a privileged courtly form, much practiced in Ferrara in those years.[89]

Among the *extravaganti*, other clearly occasional poems are a capitolo mourning the death of Eleonora d'Aragona in 1493 (*Rime disposte a lamentarvi sempre*, I ed. Fatini – but its authorship is highly controversial)[90] and a sonnet upon the elevation of Julius II in 1503 (*L'arbor ch'al viver prisco porse aita*, XXXVI ed. Fatini).[91] Among those poems later included in the canzoniere, we may mention capitolo XLIII, addressed to Cardinal

[86] The plot is the subject of the exhaustive historical analysis of Bacchelli 1931. See also Catalano 1930-1931, I, 236-240.
[87] Bacchelli 1931, 232-236.
[88] Catalano 1930-1931, I, 240-242. Ariosto, however, does acknowledge Ippolito's role in the discovery of the plot in *Fur*., XL 68 AB; XLVI 95 C. Another reference to the plot is in *Fur*., III 60-62 ABC; here, as noted by Bigi (Ariosto 2012, 167-168), Ariosto's attitude towards Giulio and Ferrante has changed: through the mouthpiece of Melissa, he invokes Alfonso's mercy.
[89] Some contemporary examples are noted by Catalano 1930-1931, I, 242; another eclogue was written on the 1506 plot, by Antonio Valtellino (Dionisotti 1937).
[90] One of the two known testimonies of it, an autograph, was probably authored by Ariosto's namesake uncle. See Catalano 1930-1931, I, 129-132.
[91] This poem, documenting the festive atmosphere in the aftermath of Alexander VI's death, may again be viewed in comparison to a poem by Bembo, the Latin elegy *Iulii secundi pontificatus maximus* (Bembo 2005, 94-96). In both poems, the image of the oak representing the Pope (*rovere*) reaches the heavens where its fragrance is enjoyed by the gods. See Ariosto, 1-4: 'L'arbor ch'al viver prisco porse aita […] / or s'ha produtto un sì soave alloro / che la fragranza in fino al ciel n'è gita' and Bembo, 21-24: 'Nec redit ad primos tantum bona quercus honores, / quos habuit mundi cum tener orbis erat: / sed provecta solo nitidis caput inserit astris, / quantum homines aluit, tantum alitura Deos'. Interestingly, Ariosto will later retrieve the rhyme *oro* : *alloro* as well as the symbol of the 'colonna', of the sonnet, to convey opposite feelings towards Julius II, now definitely an enemy (*Fur*., XII 4-5 AB; XIV C).

Ippolito (see Chapter I, 3), and capitoli XXV and XXVII, which describe *imprese* (see Chapter I, 3.2 and Chapter III, 4.2).

Apart from these clues, we have no documents informing us on the range of the circulation of Ariosto's lyrics, or on the modes of their reception: i.e. whether they were publicly read, or whether other poems (in addition to the capitolo-dialogue) were ever set to music.[92] That some form of circulation must have existed is, however, suggested from the letter by Pio, who apparently succeeded in gathering some poems not from Ariosto himself, but 'da più persone'; these may not necessarily have been Ariosto's intimate friends, but simply those who shared with him the 'courtly game'.

This makes it necessary to turn our attention to a question which has often been highlighted by Ariosto criticism, his relationship with the court as it emerges from statements included in his works, and offer a brief summary of the arguments put forward by such scholarship.

As is known, the *Satire* record Ariosto's disillusionment with his service at the courts of Ippolito and of Alfonso d'Este, where he felt as if he were in a 'cage';[93] they manifest deep disaffection towards the environment of the court, as well as more generally towards the political scene. The *Furioso* also voices a good deal of criticism against the greed, hypocrisy and ingratitude characterizing the courtly dynamics. The image resulting from these passages of Ariosto as an 'anti-courtier' coexists with the glorification of the Este dynasty in many passages of the *Furioso* itself: and indeed such glorification might be sufficient to argue in favour of Ariosto's essential conformity to the Ferrarese ideology.[94]

[92] This might have been the case of the capitoli extravaganti XX-XXV ed. Fatini (see above), as a privileged link existed in those years between the capitolo form and music (this fact was highlighted by Calmeta 1959, 52: 'overo perché il terzetto più cum la musica abia conformitade').
[93] *Sat*., III 37: 'rosignuolo in gabbia'; see also IV 17: 'augel che muta gabbia'.
[94] See at least Ferroni 1986; Larivaille 1990; Jossa 2003; Dorigatti 2017.

Some critics, including Baillet 1982, Masi 2003, and Looney 2016, have foregrounded the conflictual aspects of Ariosto's evaluation; these are evident, even if one considers the literary constraints imposed by the different poetic codes adopted, and even if one takes into account the 1517 break between him and Ippolito, which profoundly changed Ariosto's perception of the court. Masi, in particular, has argued that 'there is present in Ariosto's work the idea of literature as a panegyrical instrument; at the same time its independence is clearly vindicated',[95] and that Ariosto, while adhering to the political views of the court, yet did not adhere to the courtier's ethics, 'which was to identify with the judgements and moral laws that best reflected the interests of his own lord'.[96] Looney also claimed that an 'atteggiamento tradizionalmente dicotomico' towards the court may be recognized in Ariosto's output, which the scholar examines especially focusing on the *Carmina* and on the *Furioso*.[97]

As for the more specific concept of 'courtly poetry', Ariosto endows it with special ambiguity in a passage of the lunar episode in the *Furioso*. While illustrating the moon's landscape to Astolfo, St John articulates a long reflection on the condition of courtiers and especially of courtly writers: in this context he distinguishes between good and bad poets; the lords, he says, should always choose carefully between them, but also adequately reward them, since poets have the power to immortalize their lords for eternity in return. With regard to this, he criticizes the 'ignorant' lords, who did not understand the potential usefulness of poetry. The whole speech pivots on the idea that poets resort constantly to mystification: the great figures of the past, too – he writes – were probably very different from the image of them conveyed by poets (*Fur.*, XXXII 26,1-2 AB; XXXV C: 'Non fu sì santo né benigno Augusto / come la tuba di Virgilio suona').[98] At

[95] Masi 2003, 84.
[96] Ibid., 86.
[97] Looney 2016 (the quotation is at 46).
[98] On this passage, see also Chapter II, 3.3.

this point the reader can hardly not question the value of the *Furioso* itself, which would thus be exposed to the same charge of mystification: understandably, critics such as Jossa and Ugolini have taken this passage as a starting point to reflect on Ariosto's relationship to truth-telling.[99] It is clear, at any rate, that in exposing this paradox Ariosto is complying with the strategy of *spoudaiogelaion*, which predicated the ultimate acceptability of its arguments on their overall ambiguity: he is here aiming, as observed by Bigi, to 'ammonire, con tono tra serio e scherzoso, i principi (e magari lo stesso Ippolito)'; at the same time, he develops a more general reflection on poetry, based on his awareness of the difficulty of putting into execution (owing to the imperfection of reality) the Humanistic idea which sees art as something that eternalizes only those who are worth it.[100]

Ariosto's complex position thereby emerging may be studied as a particular case of the ambiguousness of the definition of the early-modern self which has been regarded by socio-historians as a feature of the Cinquecento.[101] For the purpose of this study, it is more relevant to ask what the role of the *rime* is within this framework. We can note that Ariosto eschews (apart from a very few cases, such as the eclogue) the *poesia politica*, nor do his lyrics display that adulatory tone that is the hallmark of courtly writers proper, such as Equicola, or Aquilano.[102] This 'freedom' is well-suited to the framework outlined above, but may additionally be viewed as a consequence of the fact that Ariosto did not receive a courtly stipend exclusively for his intellectual work.

If, however, we move from the plane of the political evaluation of the court to that of its cultural reception, matters change. Contemporary courtly discourse (key treatises that

[99] See Jossa 2013; Ugolini 2017.
[100] Ariosto 2012, 1145-1146. On the strategy of *spoudaiogeloion* we shall return later in this study.
[101] See Snyder 2009, Ugolini 2017.
[102] Kolsky's studies on his work have given a detailed account of the minutiae of the relationships between patrons and court intellectuals. On Equicola, see especially Kolsky 1986; Kolsky 1991; on Serafino's biography by Vincenzo Calmeta, a perfect observatory for the relations patrons-poets, see Kolsky 1990.

should be mentioned here are Equicola's *Libro de natura de amore*, Bembo's *Asolani* and Castiglione's *Cortegiano*) exerted on Ariosto a deep influence: it furnished him not only with themes and a way of expressing these themes, but also, more subtly, with certain rhetorical modes and methods of poetic self-representation. All these aspects will be analysed in this work: on the basis of this analysis I will also make a point of comparing the *rime* with other works by Ariosto, and try to explore the boundaries of his lyric activity, and to what extent they adhere to, or depart from, the sphere of the court.

6. Methodology

The ways Ariosto's lyric poetry interacts with the dimension of his personal biography, intersecting the plane of 'courtly duties' and in a few cases the more strictly political dimension, will be examined in Chapters I and IV – on Ariosto's elegiac self-representation and on some portrayals of the Medici family, respectively: in this context, I will offer some comparisons with the *Satire*, raising the question on the difference between lyric and satirical literary constraints (which is certainly one of the main reasons for the coexistence of a a 'courtly' and of an 'anti-courtly' Ariosto).

I shall moreover be concerned with his interest in the central themes of the lyric worldview: love, and the *questione femminile*. Indeed, the fact that nearly all of Ariosto's poems have love as their subject should be carefully weighed up in the balance as signalling Ariosto's adhesion to a 'high', noble (and courtly) poetic tradition, as opposed to the 'comic' tradition, represented by Il Pistoia, which also enjoyed great popularity in Ferrara.[103] These subjects will be analysed in Chapter II and Chapter III. In the former, I

[103] Vecchi Galli 1994, 407-408 notes that in the years between the Quattrocento and the Cinquecento the 'comic' tradition prevailed in Ferrara, while the leaders of the Petrarchist trend, Correggio and Tebaldeo, were active in Mantua, their work fostered by the powerful female presence of Isabella d'Este. According to the notes written by his son Virginio, in his youth Ariosto, too, authored 'baje', namely, comic poems (Catalano 1930-1931, I, 98-100 – the reliability of Virginio's account, however, is questionable). If we look

will show how Ariosto tackles the amorous theme, and especially how he manages the elegiac influences inherited from the Quattrocento. Chapter III will instead be dedicated to the way in which he portrays the female figure.

The general structure of the thesis, therefore, is as follows: two chapters (I, and II) centre on the analysis of the lyric subject (as a courtier and as a lover respectively), while two further chapters (III, and IV) focus on contents not directly linked to the speaker, namely, the portrayal of women and some political figures of the Medici family.

Finazzi's edition of the lyrics will be used when possible, namely, only for the lyrics belonging to the 'canzoniere' and those newly discovered by Finazzi herself. I will also adopt Finazzi's numbering. With regard to this, it is important to note that she indicates the poems included in **Vr** (following the same ordering of the manuscript) with a Roman numeral; the 'later' poems with an Arabic numeral; and with an Arabic numeral + asterisk the poems that feature in the *editio princeps* but not in the manuscripts of the main tradition. Given the restricted access to Finazzi's edition, at the end of the thesis I provide an appendix with a conversion from Fatini's to Finazzi's numbering.

The uncollected poems will be quoted from Fatini's edition (with Segre's improvements: Ariosto 1954), and they also respect its numbering. As Fatini divides the poems by metre, I will use the formulation 'poetic form + number + ed. Fatini' (e.g. sonnet I ed. Fatini).

I will follow Finazzi's conclusions also as regards the hypotheses of attribution of the most controversial poems, the only exception being eclogue II ed. Fatini, which will be discussed in Chapter IV.

at Ariosto's extant output, the poems that may comply with this definition are the twenty-three sonnets *In Cosmicum* (which however are of uncertain authorship) and sonnet XXIX ed. Fatini (*Magnifico fattor, Alfonso Trotto*).

I. Between Love and Duty: Ariosto's Elegiac Self-Fashioning

0. Preamble

This study of Ariosto's *rime* will begin by examining the characteristics of the poetic 'I', or, to use Stephen Greenblatt's fortunate phrase (Greenblatt 1980), from the idea of self-fashioning. This particular focus appears necessary, because even a superficial reading yields a strong sense that many of the poems share a systematic and coherent use of a set of patterns in terms of the interaction between the lyric subject and the world that surrounds it; the label that may be attached to such patterns, is, despite being arguably an oversimplification, that of 'autobiographism'.

More precisely, I will try to show how these personal elements are introduced into a network of *topoi* that may be traced back to the Latin love elegy, by focusing on a specific form: the capitolo in terza rima. Indeed the capitolo, an extremely popular form in the last decades of the fifteenth century,[1] had developed a strong link with the contents derived from the classical elegy –[2] a link that was claimed in a 1504 letter to Isabella d'Este by the court writer *literatus* Vincenzo Calmeta,[3] within a wider discussion of the different varieties of the capitolo aimed at fixating the canons of the genre:

> hanno li moderni poi e contemporanei nostri (o sia per la sonorità de la terza rima, o vero perché el terzetto più cum la musica abia conformitade) a li ternari l'officio de la

[1] See Introduction, 3, and Tissoni Benvenuti 2000, 305.
[2] Whereas the Florentine tradition of capitoli privileged political subjects (see the case of Machiavelli: Dionisotti 1980; on the Florentine offshoot of the capitolo, see Peirone 1990). Throughout this study, I will mean by 'elegy' the set of motifs which are found both in Latin poetry composed in elegiac couplets, and in the vernacular poetic traditions inspired by it.
[3] See Floriani 1988*bis*, 249-252.3

> elegia assignato. […] Or, essendo a li moderni poeti piaciuto volere che 'l terzetto […], secundo li elegi latini, flebili affetti e amorose lamentazioni esprimere, […] doveriano da quello effetto che fanno el nome sortire, a ciò che li stili meno se venissero a confundere.[4]

Ariosto also followed the traditional association between the capitolo and the elegiac mood in most of his *ternari*:[5] at the same time, however, he also introduced some subtle innovations. My analysis here will focus on four poems – XLIII, XLV, XXIX and XXX – that are particularly interesting in this respect, and whose similarities and (especially) differences from the late-Quattrocento capitolo will be highlighted. They are linked to each other by the similarity of the situations presented, as in all of them the speaker-Ariosto makes some references to actual events. In particular, capitolo XLIII refers to his interruption of a journey in 1514, when he was accompanying Cardinal Ippolito d'Este to Rome; in capitolo XXX he talks of being sent to Florence, probably again during his service of Ippolito; in capitolo XXIX the lyric subject is travelling to the Garfagnana. capitolo XLV, in which the chronological reference is the battle of Ravenna (1512), develops in a slightly different manner, but it may nonetheless be discussed together with the other three because it pivots on the same themes: the distance of the beloved and the tension between the space 'of the affections' and the space 'of duty'.

[4] Calmeta 1959, 52-54. See also Mengaldo 1960; Floriani 1988, 29-61; Floriani 1988*bis*; Vecchi Galli 2003, 45-47. Calmeta is defining the elegiac capitolo as opposed to 'higher' poetic versions of that genre, which he simply defines 'capitolo': 'Altra cosa al capitulo e altra a la elegia, avvenga che ambi gli stili siano in terzetti, se conviene. […]' (*ibidem*). An exploration of the elegiac themes in the Italian literary tradition may be found in the contributions gathered in Comboni-Di Ricco 2003.

[5] Floriani 1988*bis*, 250, Tissoni Benvenuti 2000, Vecchi Galli 2003, note the connection between Ariosto's capitoli and the elegiac genre. Ariosto's capitoli are defined as 'elegies' in Pigna's biography (Pigna 1554, 116: 'Trovò parimente la via delle volgari Elegie siccome nelle sue Rime si scorge […]').

The presence of such subject matter, I believe, encourages comparisons with the *Satire*: these, together with the Quattrocento capitolo, will be the other crucial reference in my analysis.

Arguably, the differences between the *Satire* and the capitoli are vast. In the *Satire*, a pioneering work for the Italian satirical genre, Ariosto succeeded in restoring classical dignity to the authorial voice by following the model of Horace.[6] The reflection developed there is complex, intertwining as it does autobiographical facts with political and historical events: through these multiple levels Ariosto weighs up his life at court, at the same time widening the horizon of his reflections to include the contemporary political scene.[7] Despite their different contents, however, one feels that because these capitoli also draw on Ariosto's life, an analysis of them in conjunction with the *Satire* (especially I, II, III and VII) may be justified. It should be noted that the speaker of the *Satire* has recently been the subject of new critical analysis, which has aimed to seek a balance between an interpretation of them as biographical documents (a reading promoted by Catalano which also extended to the *rime*, and to a certain extent continues to do so) and a purely formalist interpretation:[8] my reading of the lyrics will strive to adhere as closely as possible to this double approach.

Another element that encourages us to consider the *Satire* when examining these lyrics is their chronological overlap. Indeed, if the composition of the *Satire* (1517-1524) followed that of all these capitoli except for XXIX – assuming that their composition immediately or shortly followed the events which inspired them –, it nonetheless nearly coincided with the composition of **Vr**. As Ariosto's groundbreaking approach in the

[6] See Cucchiarelli's essay in Ariosto 2019, 265-288.
[7] I should like to refer the reader here to the most recent edition of the *Satire* (Ariosto 2019).
[8] Villa 2008, 513: 'L'opera stessa [the *Satire*] richiede al lettore di tenersi in un precario equilibrio tra la consapevolezza della finzione letteraria, della strategia dell'autorappresentazione, e la coscienza che le occasioni alle quali Ariosto reagisce sono reali […]'. On the self-fashioning in the *Satire*, see also Ugolini 2017; Marini 2018 (on satira IV); Paoli 2000, Paoli 2011.

Satire is universally recognized by critics,[9] one may therefore be justified in asking to what extent, in the same phase of his life, he was also attempting to renew the lyric capitolo – a form which shares with the satira the use of the terza rima.

Bearing in mind all these premises, I shall now turn my attention to the analysis of the capitoli.

1. Ariosto and the tradition of the 'parting between two lovers'

In the four poems I am considering, the lyric speaker is compelled to travel, the result being that he suffers on account of his separation from his beloved. The theme of distance (resulting from either the poet's or the lady's departure, for reasons not always made explicit, which include court duties or war) is a widespread legacy of the classical elegy in late-Quattrocento poetry and even constitutes an actual organizing principle in some canzonieri; for instance the Canzoniere Costabili, characterized by several sequences of poems on the poet's departure, or that by Cornazano, in which one may actually draw a clear dividing line between the lyrics *in presentia* and those *in absentia* (i.e. composed after and inspired by the lady's absence).[10]

Although this theme could be declined equally well in different metrical forms, its expression through the capitolo became regular at the turn of the century, and it came to constitute a subgenre proper, the *dipartita*, which was studied by Tissoni Benvenuti.[11]

The *dipartita* is characterized by a high degree of formalization: the speaker usually laments the difficulty of his journey, expresses his fears about his beloved's faithfulness during his absence, engages in long moral tirades against what he believes to be the

[9] On the late-Quattrocento satirical genre (namely, the background for Ariosto's innovations), see Cian 1945; Dionisotti 1980; Galbiati 1987; Floriani 1988; Bologna 1998; Tissoni Benvenuti 2000; Campeggiani 2017.
[10] See Baldassari's and Comboni's notes in Comboni-Zanato 2017, 39-41 and 245 respectively.
[11] See Tissoni Benvenuti 1976, 306, which also refers to Ariosto.

original causes of the lovers' separation (e.g. warfare). We shall consider, for example, the following excerpts, by Tebaldeo and by Sasso – in the latter case, the poet complains not only about leaving his beloved, but also Francesco and Isabella Gonzaga:

> Io me n'andrò: serà possibil questo?
> Se un dì da te non so viver lontano,
> come vivrò se fuor più tempo io resto? […]
> Ben fu crudel chi trovò prima l'arme:
> chi prio incominciò partir la terra,
> cagion che l'hom contra l'altro huomo se arme: (Tebaldeo, *Rime della vulgata*, 277,1-9)

> Partir convemme, e scio che solo el vaso
> del spirto portarò; che 'l spirto teco
> anci el partir, è già, signor, rimaso;
> Non essendo con te, non serò meco,
> che da te solo e non da me derivo,
> se 'l tuo lume non fosse, io seria cieco. (Sasso, capitolo XVIII 22-27)

At least two elements must be highlighted. The first is that in most cases, including these, the poetic persona is not expanded into a well-rounded subject (nor is it supposed to coincide with the author: it may happen that a poem is 'ghost written', as it were, in the persona of his lord or some other figure). The second thing to note regards the narrative technique. The traditional capitolo is not concerned with establishing a narration proper; it is rather supposed to embody the voice of pathos and grief. This holds true, in general, for all manifestations of fifteenth-century elegy, whose speaker inherits the inwardness of its classical models, but without the nuances (both psychological and narrative) that can be found in the latter: this would elicit, not many years later, the disapproval of Equicola, who, in a famous excerpt of his *Libro de natura de amore,* criticized the repetitive commonplaces of elegy (including the recurrence of the 'partenze').[12]

[12] *Libro de natura de amore*, 17*v*-18*r*: '[…] raccontando timori, speranze, suspitioni, gelosie, cure, […] guerre, paci, tregue, partenze, ritorni, con querele et strida più delle volte contra fortuna et caso […]' (I am quoting from the manuscript version, dating back to 1505-1508). This passage is analysed by Cracolici 1997, 24-25.

Although Tissoni Benvenuti regards XXIX as the only example of *dipartita* among Ariosto's lyrics,[13] in fact also XXX, XLIII and XLV appear to be inspired by this genre. However, in all these poems Ariosto fashions the theme of separation in a more personal way: this double level, of adhesion and innovation, will be explored in the next sections.

2. Love and warfare

In capitolo XLV (*O vera o falsa che la fama suone*) the lyric voice has just visited a battlefield: clearly, the battle in question is that of Ravenna (11 April 1512),[14] in which the Estensi allied with the French against the Holy League of Julius II, both sides suffering significant losses. The location of the battle is in fact not specified: it may only be inferred from certain details, in particular from the special emphasis placed on the (historically documented) horrific violence enacted by the French (see below).[15] The reason for this lack of specification should perhaps be sought in his desire to prioritize the expression of his personal feelings (following the dictates of the elegiac convention); but it is also possible that no further details were actually necessary. A set of shared ideas may easily be supposed to have existed between the author and his readers that would explain the genesis of this capitolo (it was after all an event that made a deep and lasting impression on all those who experienced it) – in turn, these supposed 'readers' may be identified as belonging to the milieu of Ippolito d'Este, whom Ariosto was serving in that period.

2.1. The fashioning of the first person

The description of the bloody battlefield closely reminds us of those passages in the *Furioso* which describe the same event:

[13] Tissoni Benvenuti 1976, 307.
[14] According to another interpretation, far less likely, the passage would refer to the battle of Marignano (Catalano 1930-1931, I, 342).
[15] Ibid., I, 341-343.

Io venni dove le campagne rosse
eran del sangue barbaro et latino,
che fiera stella dianzi a furor mosse;
et vidi un morto all'altro sì vicino
che, senza premer lor, quasi il terreno
a molte miglia non dava il camino;
et da chi alberga tra Garonna e 'l Reno
vidi uscir crudeltà che ne devria
tutto el mondo d'horror rimaner pieno. (*Rime*, XLV 37-45)

Nuoteranno i destrier sin alla pancia
nel sangue uman per tutta la campagna:
ch'a sepelire il popul verrà manco
tedesco, ispano, greco, italo e franco. (*Fur*., III 55,5-8 ABC)

Di qua la Francia, e di là il campo ingrossa
la gente ispana, e la battaglia è grande.
Cader si vede e far la terra rossa
la gente d'arme in amendua le bande.
Piena di sangue uman pare ogni fossa (*Fur*., XXXIII 40,1-5 C)

In the capitolo, the development of the narration is predicated on an assertive, 'realistic' first person. Ariosto is perhaps influenced by the rhetoric of the genre of the *visione*: in it, the images are usually evoked in real time in the presence of the viewer-speaker, who makes a conspicuous use of deictics and verbs of perception, which accordingly echoes the *Commedia* and the *Triumphi*[16] (it is worth noting that the latter work shows as many as ninety-five occurrences of the word 'vidi'):

Così rispose: et ecco da traverso
piena di morti tutta la campagna,
che comprender no 'l pò prosa né verso;
da India, dal Cataio, Marrocco e Spagna
el mezzo avea già pieno e le pendici
per molti tempi quella turba magna. (*Tr. Mor.*, 73-78)

[16] The *Triumphi*, in particular, constituted first-hand material for the composition of capitoli in the fifteenth and sixteenth century (just to mention some examples: Bembo's *Sogno*, ca. 1492, Vincenzo Calmeta's *Triumphi*, of 1497, on the death of Beatrice d'Este, and Correggio, *Rime*, 369, on the death of Ippolita Maria Sforza). On the reading and reception of the *Triumphi* in the Quattrocento, see Dionisotti 1974; Vecchi Galli 1999.

The echo of this rhetoric in Ariosto's capitolo, however, must be seen as belonging to a different textual situation. Ariosto is actually attempting to give the feel of a narrative chronicle; indeed he deploys the same structure in the *Furioso* in two relevant references, once again, to historical events (the tragic capture of Ercole Cantelmo: 'un Ercol vidi e un Alessandro, indutti […]' *Fur*., XXXIII 6,3 AB; XXXVI C; the capture of fifteen Venetian galleys by Ippolito, at the battle of Polesella: 'Nol vide io già […]', *Fur*., XXXVI 3,1 AB; XL C; 'Absente ero io […]', *Fur*., XXXVI 4,1 A; 'Lontano ero io […]', *Fur*., XXXVI 4,1 B), [17] always making a point of mentioning his own involvement (or lack thereof).

In this step forward towards autobiographical consistency – and mastery of time as well – Ariosto was preceded at least by Tebaldeo.[18] We may mention his capitolo 282, adopting (like 285: see below) the mouthpiece of the Marquis of Mantua Francesco Gonzaga, and written in 1496 (this also features a reference to Ravenna, where Francesco rested during his expedition to Naples):[19]

> Ma il ciel, che nega a' miseri il morire,
> fe' che per più mio mal gionsi a Ravenna;
> qui me firmai, né mi sapea partire,
> trovando del tardar mio scuse molte:
> ma a chi ad altrui si dà forza è obedire. (Tebaldeo, *Rime della vulgata*, 282,8-12)

This passage, however, is still at a certain remove from those written by Ariosto, a notable difference being that in it the lyric voice does not coincide with that of the poet.

[17] On Ariosto's connections with these historical events, see Catalano 1930-1931, I, 315-316; Maldina 2016.
[18] Marchand 1997, 166: 'L'opera tebaldeana ci offre […] la possibilità di studiare come il racconto dell'io emerga progressivamente dall'elegia per conquistare la sua quasi piena autonomia […]. Infatti, mentre nella maggior parte dei capitoli il protagonista rappresenta il proprio dolore nel tempo stesso del componimento, alcuni cominciano a dare spazio ad eventi anteriori e posteriori al tempo del racconto […]'.
[19] Ibid., 167.

2.2. An example of courtly wit

Ariosto's fragment on Ravenna, however, despite its narrative development, is framed within a context that is entirely lyric-elegiac. Indeed, the visit to the battlefield is pursued by the speaker, a frustrated lover, as an attempt to remedy his unhappiness through a drastic distancing from the object of his desire, as he is certain that, in such a place, he will encounter greater suffering than his own.

This proto-mannerist rhetoric derives from an enhancement of the Petrarchan pattern of antithesis:[20] let us compare the following passage by Ariosto, in which the speaker, reflecting on the ineffectuality of warfare as a remedy, lays out a number of rhetorical variations,

> Ché s'un contrario all'altro è medicina
> non so perché, da l'un pigliando forza,
> per l'altro la mia doglia non declina (*Rime*, XLV 22-24)[21]

to its probable source, namely *Rvf*, XLVIII, so as to show how Ariosto turns the psychological investigation of the reciprocal effects of opposing principles carried out by Petrarch into a strictly medical question:

> Se mai foco per foco non si spense,
> né fiume fu già mai secco per pioggia,
> ma sempre l'un per l'altro simil poggia,
> et spesso l'un contrario l'altro accense,
> Amor, tu che' pensier' nostri dispense,
> al qual un'alma in duo corpi s'appoggia,
> perché fai in lei con disusata foggia
> men per molto voler le voglie intense? (*Rvf*, XLVIII 1-8)

[20] On the use of the oxymoron in Medieval love poetry, see Gigliucci 1990; for its Renaissance use, see Gigliucci 2004.
[21] See also *Fur*., VI 49,1-2 ABC: 'Deh! perché vo le mie piaghe toccando, / senza speranza poi di medicina?'.

An identification between love and illness is implied in Ariosto's argument, and, as its counterpart, the identification of distance as a medicine. As a matter of fact, Ariosto's suggestion, separation as a remedy for unhappy love, is an antierotic (or, allopathic) strategy and implies his knowledge of a specific Quattrocento genre, that of writings (most often, dialogues) against love. These texts (for which see also Chapter II, 0) articulate a discourse that systematically deploys medical language; in turn, they are clearly influenced by Ovid's *Remedia amoris*, which was possibly a direct source also for Ariosto. Here, the speaker-preceptor prescribes separation on the assumption that Love especially strikes the idle, in order to 'give the empty mind some business to occupy it'; among the activities that can be pursued at a distance from the beloved woman, he recommends warfare, as well as political engagement:

> Sunt fora, sunt leges, sunt, quos tuearis, amici:
> vade per urbanae splendida castra togae.
> Vel tu sanguinei iuvenalia munera Martis
> suspice: deliciae iam tibi terga dabunt.
> Ecce, fugax Parthus, magni nova causa triumphi,
> iam videt in campis Caesaris arma suis:
> vince Cupidineas partier Parthasque sagittas,
> et refer ad patrios bina tropaea deos. (*Rem. am*., 151-158)

The medical concepts implied in Ariosto's lyrics will be better discussed at 6.3. For now, it is important to note that the speaker of capitolo XLV does not reach his antierotic goal. Indeed, he realizes that the pain of the soldiers is soon silenced by death, and is therefore incomparably smaller than his agony:

> Io notai che 'l mal lor li trahea fuore
> del mal, perché sì grave era che presto
> finia la vita insieme col dolore;
> il mio mi pon fin su le porte, e questo
> medesmo ir non mi lascia, et torna indrieto
> et fa che mal mio grado in vita resto. (*Rime*, XLV 52-57)

Eventually, he decides to return ('Io torno a voi', 58). In other words, he has failed in effecting the cure prescribed by Ovid, who explicitly warned his pupils not to cease to their suffering, or to the desire of return to their love.[22]

To sum up, a subject (the battle of Ravenna) that, in the *Furioso*, is depicted in purely dramatic tones and also occasions moral reflections,[23] is here treated in a paradoxical manner. We might even speak of a reversal of the *dipartita*, as the separation here has been willingly pursued by the poet-lover. What is more, at the end he has neither forgotten his beloved nor fulfilled any military duty and has, therefore, come to a standstill. I believe this hyperbolical rhetoric is the most evident trace of the 'courtly' repertoire in this capitolo; and that his deployment of this rhetoric supports the hypothesis that the capitolo was indeed originally conceived for courtly circulation.[24]

Finally, a question should be asked: did Ariosto actually visit the battlefield? Catalano, relying only on poetic evidence, believes he did;[25] it seems to me that we should agree with the scholar, because the poet's use of paradox, as well as his overall narrative strategy, characterized by assertiveness and vividness, would have been ineffectual if the situation had no basis in reality.

If we accept this, we would have here a first set of elements to describe Ariosto's strategy of self-fashioning, more specifically as a subject so taken up with love as to interpret any situation in the light of this passion, inverting the proper order of his duties

[22] *Rem. am*., 213-218: 'Tu tantum quamvis firmis retinebere vinclis / i procul, et longas carpere perge vias; / flebis, et occurret desertae nomen amicae, / stabit et in media pes tibi saepe via: / sed quanto minus ire voles, magis ire memento; / perfer, et invitos currere coge pedes'.
[23] We should at least mention a lengthy passage at *Fur*., XII 2-10 AB; XIV C, in which the narrator, ambiguously suspended between celebratory tones (this was Alfonso I's greatest enterprise) and deploration, lingers over the high price of victory.
[24] For instance, a similar employment of the theme of illness in courtly poetry is in Correggio, *Rime*, 212,1-4: 'Non fur mai fiamme da le fiamme spente / ma l'una ognor fa più l'altra gagliarda; / pioggia non secca fiume, e non si tarda / per sproni il corso d'un destrer corrente. / Amor, per farmi il mio disio presente, / altro non è che a dir: — Chi è acceso si arda —: / tu mi fai un Tantal che ne l'acqua guarda, / anzi un giaccio propinquo a un foco ardente'.
[25] Catalano 1930-1931, I, 341-342.

and becoming an outsider in his own environment: an 'anti-courtier' who expresses himself through the means of courtly poetry.

3. A poem addressed to Ippolito d'Este

The features of Ariosto's self-portrait that have emerged from XLV are confirmed by capitolo XLIII (*Del bel numero vostro havrete un manco*), occasioned by an event which took place in October 1514: Ariosto, who was accompanying Cardinal Ippolito to Rome, was forced by a sudden illness to stop at the Furlo Pass.[26] This poem addresses Ippolito himself, and is in fact a most interesting testimony to Ariosto's lyric activity at the cardinal's court: its analysis will allow us to touch upon Ariosto's relation to patronage, and to draw a comparison with the *Satire* in terms of the formulation of this theme.

3.1. Ludovico as Tibullus, Ippolito as Messalla

In the opening lines, Ariosto apologizes to the cardinal for not being able to follow him any further:

> Del bel numero vostro havrete un manco,
> Signor, ché qui rest'io dove Apenino
> d'alta percossa aperto mostra il fianco, (*Rime*, XLIII 1-3)
> Tiemme la febre, […] (10)

This opening is an exact calque of the *incipit* of Tibullus I 3: 'Ibitis Aegaeas sine me, Messalla, per undas, / o utinam memores ipse cohorsque mei! / me tenet ignotis aegrum Phaeacia terris' (1-3).[27] It should also be noted that the whole situation outlined by Ariosto mirrors the source: Tibullus, too, is telling his lord, Messalla, that an illness has

[26] Ibid., I 374-375.
[27] This link has been noted, to my knowledge, only by Floriani 1988*bis*, 252 (the scholar, moreover, hypothesizes that Ariosto may also have had in mind this Tibullian elegy in the opening lines of satira I).

prevented him from following his entourage; later Ariosto again rewrites Tibullus, when he expresses his fear of dying in a foreign land, far away from the woman he loves.[28]

This is an exceptional case displaying a coincidence between a real situation and a motif belonging to literary tradition. The aim of this capitolo is not only, however, to provide a simple rewriting of a classical text: it is, most of all, to pay homage to Ippolito, through a strategy that should now be briefly outlined.

First, the borrowing from Tibullus enables Ariosto to implicitly praise the figure of the cardinal as a modern Messalla, that is, as a figure of power, but also as a patron of the arts (Messalla famously promoted the activity of a group of writers, one of whom was Tibullus, who were known as the 'Messalla circle'). In his choice of representing Ippolito along these lines, Ariosto only partially follows a strategy of embellishment. Indeed, contemporary historical research on the cardinal has unearthed his profound interest in the arts, music, and the sciences, overall pointing to a cultural background that was certainly superior to that of his brother Alfonso. His passion for literature was also notable and led him to encourage, along with the composition of the *Furioso*, also works by Equicola and Calcagnini.[29] Giuseppe Antonelli's statement that Ippolito 'ne' suoi viaggi sempre seco trasportava buon numero di volumi'[30] suggests the intriguing conjecture that he might have read Tibullus during the 1514 journey (and perhaps discussed this reading with Ariosto).

Another homage to Ippolito occurs at ll. 13-14. The poet, maintaining a tone of bland confidentiality (which significantly diverges from the gloomy funereal register adopted

[28] *Rime*, XXV 61-67: 'Ché se qui moro, non ho chi mi pianga: / qui sorelle non ho, non ho qui matre / che sopra il morto corpo il capel franga, / né quatro frati miei, che con vesti atre / m'accompagnino al lapide che l'ossa / devria chiuder del figlio allato il patre / Madonna non è qui […]'. Tibullus, I 3,5-9: 'abstineas, Mors atra, precor: non hic mihi mater / quae legat in maestos osa perusta sinus, / non soror, Assyrios cineri quae dedat odores / et fleat effusis ante sepulcra comis, / Delia non usquam […]'. This time the borrowing was noted by Segre (Ariosto 1954, 187). If the dating to 1514 is correct, the woman must be identified as Alessandra Benucci.

[29] On Cardinal Ippolito, see Menegatti 2016; Menegatti 2017, esp. 50-51; Dorigatti 2018*bis*.

[30] Quoted in Dorigatti 2018*bis*, 21.

by Tibullus) jokingly wishes that the fever had come at a more opportune moment, and had prevented his setting out in the first place, thus sparing him the pain of separation from his beloved lady. Within this statement, he resorts to an equation (highlighted by the *enjambement*) of woman and lord as two lights:

> Ché s'ero per restar privo de l'una
> mia luce, al men non devea l'altra tormi
> la sempre aversa a' miei disir' Fortuna.
> Deh, perché quando honestamente sciormi
> dal debito potea, che qui mi trasse,
> non venne più per tempo in letto a pormi? (*Rime*, XLIII 13-18)

Finally, the encomiastic aim of the poem may also be inferred from the mention of Ferrara, the city in which the poet hopes to be buried if he dies ('Almen l'inutil' spoglie habbia Ferrara', 91): while homaging his lord, Ariosto is also here declaring his ultimate faithfulness to his homeland.

Ariosto-the-speaker also makes a point of highlighting his identity as a courtier. At ll. 13-18 (see above), he is stressing his own involvement in a logic well-established within this repertoire: that is, the ongoing conflict between its two key principles, love and duty, which forces the poet, a servant of both, into a hard choice. The ultimate victory of love is declared in the central section of the text: here the speaker claims to be relentlessly hounded by Love, because he wishes to take revenge on him for setting out against his dictates. It should be observed that Ariosto is not following the traditional iconography of Love as a winged boy, but portrays him, instead, as the overpowering ruler of another court, in open competition with that of Ippolito ('tyran' corresponds to 'Signor' at l. 2):

> Né per spronare o caricar d'antenna
> si può fuggir, o con cavallo o nave,
> che non ne giunga in un spiegar di penna. (*Rime*, XLIII 37-39)

> Questo tyran, non men crudel che forte,
> ch'anchor mai perdonar non seppe offesa

né lascia entrar pietà ne la sua corte,
perché mille fiate et più contesa
m'havea la lunga via, che sì m'absenta
da quella luce in c'ho l'anima accesa,
de la inobedientia hor mi tormenta […] (Ibid., 43-49)

The development of the love theme also determines the revision of another motif drawn from Tibullus, the envisioning of the poet's epitaph at the end of the capitolo. While Tibullus's tombstone meant to immortalize him only as a comrade of Messalla's (I 3,55-56: 'HIC IACET IMMITI CONSVMPTVS MORTE TIBVLLVS, / MESSALLAM TERRA DVM SEQVITVRQVE MARI'), Ariosto designs his inscription so as to appear as a victim of sorrow caused by separation: 'così né anchor chi questo marmo serra / viver lontan da la sua donna puote' (96-97).[31]

The contrast between love and the claims of honour also underlies several points in the *Furioso*, to such an extent that it can be regarded as a constant centrifugal force. It always ends with the victory of love, which takes the form either of an insane overturning of chivalric values (see the case of Orlando and Rinaldo, who are seduced away from their obligations towards the Christian army by Angelica's charms) or that of the 'rational' call of marital obligations. The latter is the case of Ruggiero, who is continually torn between his predestined marriage to Bradamante and his devotion to king Agramante. Significantly, similar lexical choices can be detected between the capitolo and an octave whose subject is Ruggiero (italics mine):

Restomi qui, né, come Amor vorebbe,
posso Madonna satisfar, (*Rime*, XLIII 7-8)

né per *spronare* o caricar d'antenna
si può fuggir, (Ibid., 37-38)

Tra sé volve Ruggiero e fa discorso,
se *restar* deve, o il suo signor *seguire*.
Gli pon l'amor de la sua donna un morso
per non lasciarlo in Africa più gire:
lo volta e gira, et a contrario corso
lo *sprona*, e lo minaccia di *punire*,

[31] An epitaph also features in Propertius, II 13b,19-20: 'et duo sint versus: QVI NUNC IACET HORRIDA PVLVIS, / VNIVS HIC QVONDAM SERVVS AMORIS ERAT'. Unlike Tibullus's, this is prompted by an amorous motivation (the general situation is, however, different from that in Ariosto's capitolo, since Propertius envisages his death as caused by his beloved woman's ingratitude).

Tal fallo poi di *punition* sì grave
punisce […] (40-41)

s'el patto e 'l giuramento non tien saldo,
che fatto avea col paladin Rinaldo. (*Fur*., XXXVI 66 AB; XL 66 C)

The speaker of the capitolo, however, cannot even aspire to be regarded as an analogue of Ruggiero. Indeed, his illness prevents him from even choosing between his court obligations and his *servitium amoris*, and any such contest is, therefore, inscribed in the realm of pure imagination. This is one of the points that clearly show how, also in the *rime*, irony is deployed as a fundamental lens through which Ariosto views his situations; something which, incidentally, constitutes another novelty compared to the 'purer' manifestations of elegy.

3.2. Ippolito d'Este as lover

In this capitolo, therefore, as in XLV, Ariosto depicts himself as an outsider, who sets love above all other forms of duty. Could such an attitude, even it if was merely a literary pose, run the risk of alienating favour from his addressee?

If we look at the internal evidence offered by the text, the answer is no. Indeed, the poet assimilated Ippolito into the poem: the fact that Ippolito himself is a lover binds the two closely. See how Ariosto invokes his lord's indulgence for his behaviour, counting on the fact that the latter, too is among those 'che n'ha fatto esperimento' (*Fur*., XXI 112,3 AB; XXIII C):

ma mi fido ch'a voi, che de la fiera
punta de Amor chiara notitia havete,
debba la colpa mia parer leggiera.
Così vi sien tutte le imprese liete,
com'è ben ver ch'ella talhor v'ha punto,
né sano forse anchora hoggi ne sete. (*Rime*, XLIII 28-33)

In representing Ippolito as a lover, Ariosto certainly met with his lord's approval. Indeed, within the system of relationships between those in power and court literati, the lords not only enjoyed appearing as political centres, but also being involved in the fashionable code of love, which constituted the basis of the intellectual exchange between themselves and their entourage and prompted their activity as patrons: they commissioned poems, emblems, *mottos* and so on. The following capitolo by Tebaldeo, for which he used the mouthpiece of Francesco Gonzaga, may be taken as a further example. The marquis is obliged to support Venice in its war against France, but all his thoughts are occupied by love, and he begs forgiveness for his lack of military prowess:

> Sendo io al stipendio del Leon condutto,
> ve andai, pensa cum qual ira e travaglia,
> ch'io fui qual pianta svèlta in su il far frutto! […]
> de altro fastidio fu il combatter mio,
> ché loro [Camillo and Cesare] ebber la pugna sol cum Galli
> et io cum Galli e cum Amor, che è dio;
> era divisa a dui diversi balli
> la mente mia, e son degno de scusa
> s'io avesse nel pugnar commessi falli. (Tebaldeo, *Rime della vulgata*, 285,100-114)

That Cardinal Ippolito, too, was willing to be represented as a lover is confirmed in another capitolo by Ariosto, XXV. Here, the lyric voice describes a burden that oppresses him almost unbearably, and in order to describe its strength, it engages in a long series of metaphors and similes which draws on various *topoi* of endurance:

> De sì calloso dosso et sì robusto
> non ha né dromedario, né elephante
> l'odorato indo, o l'ethiope adusto
> che possa star, non che mutar le piante,
> se radoppiata gli è la soma poi
> che l'ha qual può patir, né può più inante. (*Rime,* XXV 1-6)[32]

[32] See *Purg.*, XXXI 16-19: 'Come balestro frange, quando scocca / da troppa tesa la sua corda e l'arco […] sì scoppia' io sottesso grave carco'.

This obscure subject has long defied understanding; it was Bozzetti who eventually grasped its correct meaning by linking the opening image of the capitolo, an excessively burdened dromedary, to Ippolito d'Este's *impresa*: a kneeling camel accompanied by the Spanish motto 'No suefro mas de lo que puedo'.[33] It was thus proved that the capitolo was written at the request of Ippolito, probably when the cardinal, a keen collector of *imprese,* first adopted that of the camel.[34] Incidentally, Ariosto's poetic response to the creation of an *impresa* is significant, as it demonstrates that he, too, complied with this well-established vogue by means of which court literati tried to 'smooth their way to patronage'.[35] A parallel case may be seen in the Latin dialogue *De opportunitate* by Mario Equicola (1507), which illustrates another of Ippolito's devices – a falcon holding a balancing weight in its beak, whose probable inventor was Leonardo da Vinci.[36] Ariosto's poem is a description, not an interpretation: this enigmatic quality was itself also a characteristic element of courtly custom, as is evident from a letter by Equicola in which he asks Ippolito if he may incorporate some of his *imprese* in his writings, specifying that he would not however be so presumptuous as to wish to fully penetrate their meaning.[37]

[33] Bozzetti 1985, 96. Indeed, translations and rewritings of this motto recur at various point throughout the capitolo: 'che l'ha qual può patir; né può più inante' (6); 'quando superchia le sue forze il pondo' (15); ' che non si rompa a tirar senza fine' (18); 'ma se de più sol una dramma leve / giunta mi fia, verrei subito a manco' (29-30), and, in the closing line (43), 'c'ho fatto oltra il poter e a più non basto'. The presence (highlighted by Finazzi) of a variant, in two manuscripts carrying an earlier version of the capitolo, bears out Bozzetti's intuition that the camel itself is the persona of the poem: indeed, in the original version, the last line was 'c'ho fatto oltra il poter e amàs no abasto', where the Spanish hemistich clearly reminds us of the motto. According to Bozzetti and Finazzi, Ariosto later included the capitolo in **Vr** because its ambiguousness allowed a reading of it as a poem on the suffering caused by love (but see also Chapter III, 4.2).

[34] Giovio 1559, 117: 'portò anchora per impresa amorosa un Camelo inginocchiato carico d'una gran soma con un motto, che diceva; NON SUEFRO MAS DE LO QUE PUEDO; volendo dire alla dama sua, non mi date più gravezza di tormenti di quel che posso sopportare'. Giovio does not say when Ippolito first adopted this *impresa* (it can only be argued that the choice of language was prompted by the fashion for all things Spanish triggered by the arrival of Lucrezia Borgia's court at Ferrara).

[35] Schirg 2015, 136. Other examples of *imprese* in the *Rime* are analysed in Chapter III, 4.1-4.2.

[36] This was discovered by Schirg 2015; see also Dorigatti 2018*bis*, 27-28. On *De opportunitate*, see also Kolsky 1991, 97-101.

[37] The letter is quoted in Kolsky 1991, 101.

At any rate, what is especially of interest here is that Giovio clearly ascribes Ippolito's camel *impresa* to an amorous motivation: this proves that the passion of love belonged to the public self-fashioning of the then young cardinal. This point is confirmed by surviving biographical accounts, which depict Ippolito as definitely more devoted to secular life than to religious concerns – an assiduous frequenter of balls and hunting parties, who took a particular interest in his physical appearance and expensive clothes,[38] and made no secret of his infatuations.[39] That he may have been likeable is suggested by Castiglione in the *Cortegiano*: 'forza è che ciascun che gli parla o pur lo vede gli resti perpetuamente affezionato' (I.XIV). Finally, Ippolito also took delight in love poetry, and it is worth remembering that in 1503 Equicola gifted him the manuscript of his *Libro de natura de amore*.[40]

It is therefore clear that, in capitolo XLIII, the resistance Ariosto displays against the courtly mindscape is only apparent, and in fact is simply a rhetorical game, to be played first and foremost with his lord and master.

3.3. A contradictory portrait

The degree of sincerity of Ariosto's flattery in this capitolo might perhaps be questioned by the reader. Indeed, the myth of Cardinal Ippolito, fuelled by Ariosto's early biographers and still carrying some authority, is undoubtedly a negative one. Scholars and readers tend to remember him exclusively as an ungrateful patron – an interpretation that stems from Ariosto's words in satira I.[41] This was famously written after the definitive break between the two men in 1517, when Ariosto refused to follow Ippolito

[38] Catalano 1930-1931, I, 180-184.
[39] There is documentary record of his infatuation for Angela Borgia (one of Lucrezia's damsels), which would ignite his rivalry with his stepbrother don Giulio and, as a consequence, trigger the plot of don Giulio and don Ferrante (see Introduction).
[40] Equicola 1999, 18 footnote 3.
[41] See also *Sat.*, V 233-234: 'dal giogo / del Cardinal da Este oppresso fui'.

to his new see in Eger (Hungary) unlike other courtiers belonging to his entourage, such as Ludovico da Bagno and the poet's brother Alessandro (the two addressees of the satira). After briefly sketching in the incipit a decidedly uncomplimentary portrait of courtly life (suggesting that none of Ippolito's other courtiers would ever speak out in defence of Ariosto's decision, so as not to offend the cardinal, ll. 1-9), he lists the reasons that drove him to his refusal. In a long and justly famous tirade he voices his disappointment caused by Ippolito's disregard of his poetic activity (he is referring specifically to the *Furioso*, which was entirely written under the cardinal's patronage), and his belief that other court offices, which in fact were degrading and menial, were much more worthy of recompense:

> Non vuol che laude sua da me composta
> per opra degna di mercé si pona;
> di mercé degno è l'ir correndo in posta. (*Sat*., I 97-99)

The rhetorical apex of the speech comes as the poet stakes his claim, which may well be seen as humanistic, to personal freedom (ll. 118-123).

So far, it would appear that the satira was written under the sole influence of an anti-courtly impulse. This view, however, is contradicted by the passage that immediately follows, which is in fact often overlooked by scholars. Ariosto writes (124-135) that his bitterness derives not so much from the cutting of the ties between himself and Ippolito, as from the anger of the cardinal, who 'da l'amor e grazia sua mi esclud[e]' (132), and by his accusations of unfaithfulness. As Baillet, and more recently Russo, have highlighted, these words suggest a relationship of affection between the two, which, despite everything, was still strong: this would be confirmed by the fact that Ariosto did not

expunge the dedication to Ippolito from either the 1521 or the 1532 versions of the *Furioso*.[42]

A residue of nostalgia for court life can also be felt in the aforementioned ll. 97-99, where Ariosto writes he would like to be acknowledged not merely as a poet, but as an author of 'laude', i.e. poetry in celebration of his lord. This was precisely the aim of the *Furioso*,[43] expressed in its dedication: 'Quel ch'io vi debbo […]'; 'quanto io posso dar, tutto vi dono' (*Fur*., I 3,4-8 ABC) – a passage which, according to Masi, can be associated to capitolo XLIII (indeed, Ariosto places emphasis on the 'debito', meaning court obligation: 'Deh, perché quando honestamente sciormi / dal debito potea', 16-17), in the expression of an 'unadulatory' intention.[44] A true sense of gratitude on Ariosto's part is more than plausible, and must have been hard to forget even after 1517, although the two had different conceptions of what was deserving of 'mercé' (a keyword not specifically of the satira, but in general of the courtly mindset).[45] Indeed in the court's social system lords were the only source of income, and those on whom the production of literature depended; not to mention that the cardinal himself could still elicit Ariosto's personal sympathy because of his culture and their mental affinity.

The aim of the preceding section has been to establish a continuity between the capitolo and the satira: a margin of contradiction, nevertheless, continues to exist, and may not only be impossible to entirely erase, but is also a sign of the complexity of Ariosto's position – a complexity already evident in his choice to include the capitolo in his provisional canzoniere, at a point in time when the break had occurred and the first satira had already been written.

[42] See Baillet 1982, 88-90, and Russo's commentary in Ariosto 2019, 38-39; 53-54.
[43] On the descriptions and praises of Ippolito in the *Furioso*, see Stimato 2009.
[44] Masi 2003, 83.
[45] See also Correggio, *Rime*, 346, 9-11: 'E cusì spesso va chi a prezio vende / sua libertà, che pria che a casa rieda, / debito resta, e il ricevuto spende'; Tebaldeo, *Rime estravaganti*, 310, 11-14: 'e tai son verso me li merti toi / che quando e vita e honor per te spenda io, / anchor tuo debitor scriver me pòi'.

3.4. Capitolo XLIII *vis-à-vis* satira I: identifying traits

This comparison between capitolo XLIII and satira I deserves to be further investigated: it allows us to identify on the one hand certain typically Ariostean traits, and, on the other, the characteristics that clearly differentiate the two genres. In this regard, it should be noted that a mere three years – albeit crucial years – separated the composition of the two works: as he was writing the satira, Ariosto most certainly still had in mind the capitolo, and it is tempting to envision the former as a 'palinody' of the latter, once the illusion of obtaining any compensation for his poetic homages had lost hold.

Let us examine some relevant similarities. First, the two poems are occasioned by similar situations: two refusals – circumstances particularly suitable for the poet to reflect on his role at court. Another link is, as already mentioned, the reference to the 'debito': a key concept that, in turn, reconnects to various sections of the *Furioso* that develop the theme of exchange – so much so that critics[46] have regarded it as one of the poem's primary threads, as well as a sign of the sociohistorical conditions in which writers exerted their activity.

Also Ariosto's self-fashioning is to a certain extant similar between the two poems. He emerges from both not only as a 'failed' (though only ostensibly) courtier, but also as a person who speaks the truth, even though this may have potentially negative consequences:[47]

> Io so ben quanto mal mi si convegna
> dir, Signor mio, che fra sì lieta schiera

[46] See Durling 1965, 167; Zatti 1990, 140-141 (useful for an analysis of the concept of 'debito' in several episodes of the *Furioso*); Residori 2018 (specifically on the theme of ingratitude). Also the motto PRO BONO MALVM appended to the end of the poem has generally been explained in the light of the concepts of gratitude/ingratitude; see Bolzoni 2017 and bibliography.

[47] Attention has been drawn to this aspect as typically Ariostean (though it has also been observed that it is typical more in general of the early Renaissance) in Ugolini 2017.

io malcontento sol dietro vi vegna (*Rime*, XLIII, 25-27)

Ma se in altro biasmarme, almen dar laude
dovete che, volendo io rimanere,
lo dissi a viso aperto e non con fraude.
Dissi molte ragioni, e tutte vere (*Sat.*, I, 19-22)

It is nevertheless natural that the differences should outnumber the similarities: such differences are connected to the different configurations of the poetic subject (a moral drive lies behind the *Satire*, the pure expression of love inspires the capitolo). To list all of these differences is clearly unnecessary; I shall nevertheless underscore one crucial point: the different management of the temporal dimension. In the *Satire*, the speaker is at a certain remove from the events he describes (at the beginning of Satira I, he wonders 's'in corte è ricordanza più di noi', 3), while the capitolo is entirely played out in the present: the present tense of its composition concides with that of the situation it describes. By means of this rhetorical solution, which is different from that deployed in capitolo XLV, Ariosto nevertheless achieves a similar effect as the latter, that of emotionally involving the reader/listener in the dynamic of the situation he is recounting.

4. A mission to Florence

In capitolo XXX (*Gentil città, che con felici auguri*), the poet speaks from Florence. His reference to the city as being governed by the Medici allows us to infer that it was written after September 1512, but it is nonetheless hard to determine exactly what journey inspired the capitolo, among the numerous ones he undertook in that period. While Fatini[48] argues for that of 1516 or that of 1519, I would personally consider the hypothesis of an earlier chronology. This point will be examined in Chapter IV, and I will now turn

[48] Fatini 1934, 182-184.

my attention to the central subject of this chapter, i.e. self-fashioning and its relation to the tradition of the elegiac capitolo.

4.1. The rhetoric of eulogy

In the first part of the poem, and actually for two thirds of its length, Ariosto lists the beauties of Florence. His praise is closely modelled on Leonardo Bruni's *Laudatio florentinae urbis*,[49] a pamphlet of 1403-1404; this was by far the most renowned eulogy of a city from the Humanist period and often influenced later literature, both in prose and verse.[50] Among its imitations in the tradition of the Po valley, one may mention Tebaldeo's *Ad Magnificum Laurentium Medicem*, a Latin poem composed of 210 hexameters that dates to around 1480: here, the praise of Florence acts as a prelude to a celebration of Lorenzo il Magnifico, to whom the author addresses a number of precepts on the good government of the state.[51] One further example, even more interesting in that it is written in Italian terza rima, is Cornazano's *De laudibus urbis Florentiae*, of 1464. This is a collection of four capitoli in praise of Florence, which is personified as a woman, with the purpose of celebrating the city's alliance with Milan. Finally, we should not overlook the proem to Cristoforo Landino's *Comento* on Dante's *Comedy*, first printed in 1481 and widely reprinted since then.[52] Here, Landino articulates a long praise of Florence (within the general context of a defence of Dante against those who accused him of offending his hometown), exhalting its political history and the virtues of its people.[53]

[49] This link was mentioned, but not discussed, in Rinaldi 2000, 316.
[50] For an overview of the reception and fortune of this work, see Bruni 2000, XXIII-XXVII and bibliography; Stäuble 1976.
[51] A description of the poem is in Pasquazi 1966, CIV-CVII; the text is ibid., 58-62.
[52] See Richardson 1995, 255-257.
[53] See Lentzen 1985, which also deals with the other works by Landino which have sections encomiastic of Florence, the *Xandra* and the *Prolusione su Petrarca*.

Although Ariosto probably knew all these works, he drew on Bruni alone for his panegyric. The points that owe a debt to the rambling rhetoric of the *Laudatio* may easily be identified. The opening of the capitolo takes up the *topos modestiae,* which also dominates the first section (pars 1-3) of the pamphlet. The capitolo then touches upon the naturalistic beauties of the city: the rivers Mugnone and Arno with their tributaries (10-18),[54] the fertility of the land, its breadth:

> narar quanto si' ameno
> et fecondo il tuo pian, che si distende
> tra verdi poggi (*Rime*, XXX 13-15)

> A ceteris autem partibus apricissimi se explicant campi, ad zephiros amen magis aperti. (*Laudatio*, 572)

Another borrowing from Bruni is in the praise of the city's cleanliness:

> Non ha il verno poter ch'in te mai porti
> di sua immondicia, sì ben questi monti
> t'han lastricata sin alli angiporti. (*Rime*, XXX 37-39)

> Quid enim mirabilius quam in populosissima urbe nichil usquam limi apparere, imbrem autem quamvis maximum nichil impedire quominus siccis plantis urbem perambules, cum prius ferme opportunis rivis aqua pluvia absorta est quam in terra fuerit delapsa? (*Laudatio*, 574)

Ariosto next lists the architectural elements of Florence (even though in generic terms and never mentioning any of them by name). Like Bruni, he insists on the suburban villas and on the *palazzi* lying outside the city centre,[55] on the magnificence of its churches and

[54] *Laudatio*, 576: 'Amnis vero, qui per mediam fluit urbem, difficile dictu est plusne utilitatis afferat an amenitatis'.
[55] *Rime*, XXX 19: 'A veder pien di tante ville i colli'; 22-23: 'Se dentro un mur, sotto il medesmo nome / fusser raccolti i tuoi palazzi sparsi'; *Laudatio*, 580-582: '[…] ita hec extra urbem edificia universos circum

the dwellings of private citizens;[56] he also highlights its incomparability to other cities, a theme on which Bruni, too, particularly insists.[57]

This praise of Florence, which is unique within Ariosto's oeuvre, should not, however, lead us to think that the poem's true aim is encomiastic. Indeed, the encomium is merely a pretext, though this appears clearly only when we have reached the final section of the poem.

4.2. The woman and the homeland

From line 52 the encomiastic register is replaced by the 'middling' code of love suffering: all the beauties of Florence, the speaker says, are of no interest to him, since he is overcome with grief. From this point onward he, in line with the elegiac formula, laments leaving his lady, again referred to, like in XLIII, as 'la mia luce' (59). The sudden introduction of this motif undoubtedly catches the reader off-balance, shedding an ironic light on all that came before (and casting doubt on the validity of the praise of Florence itself).

The speaker's melancholy is not, however, only prompted by the absence of his beloved. Indeed, the long description of Florence also aims at evoking, by contrast, Ferrara. The memory of the poet's homeland, with the strong sense of nostalgia that comes with it, is evident in the following lines, where the river Po is mentioned ('re de' fiumi'): its majesty seems to indirectly mirror the homage to 'Mugnone' and 'Arno' some lines earlier (10, 16).

montes collesque et planitiem occupant, ut potius e celo delapsa quam manu hominum facta videantur. At quanta horum edificiorum magnificentia est, quantum decus, quantus ornatus!'.

[56] *Rime*, XXX 34-35: 'Chi potrà a pien lodar li tetti regii / d'i tuoi privati, i portici e le corti'; *Laudatio*, 578: 'Sed redeo ad privatorum domos, que ad delitias, ad amplitudinem, ad honestatem maximeque ad magnificentiam instructe, excogitate, edificate sunt'.

[57] *Rime*, XXX 24: 'non ti serien da paregiar due Rome'; *Laudatio*, 576: 'Quid est in toto orbe tam splendidum aut tam magnificum quod cum edificiis huius sit comparandum?'.

Gli tuoi Medici, anchor che sieno tali
che t'habian salda ogni tua antiqua piaga,
non han però rimedio alli mei mali.
Oltra a quei monti, a ripa l'onda vaga
del re de' fiumi, in bianca et pura stola
cantando ferma il sol la bella maga
che con sua vista può sanarmi sola. (*Rime*, XXX 70-76)

Another memory of Ferrara lies in the final hinting that his woman may be a 'maga'. As we shall see (6.3.2), the sorceress is a recurring figure in Ferrarese poetry: Ariosto's choice to use it thus belies a conscious cultural bias and shows his fondness of Ferrarese culture (with its long-standing predilection for French tales of magic) above all other intellectual milieus. All the more so if one considers that Ariosto employs the same words and rhymes to describe, in the *Furioso*, the sorceress Melissa,[58] the unrequited lover of the 'cavaliere del nappo', who almost certainly is not simply a homonym of Melissa-the-protector-of-Bradamante, but is actually the same character.[59] Melissa, as is known, acts as a protector of Ruggiero and Bradamante, and works towards the accomplishment of their union, from which the Este dynasty will originate. In other words, the 'maga' of Capitolo XXX was probably inspired by the ongoing composition of the *Furioso*, and inescapably reminds us of the Ferrarese sorceress par excellence.

We may conclude that in this poem the feeling of nostalgia for one's homeland plays a decisive role and constitutes a conscious integration with the simple love longing. The theme of homesickness does not certainly feel new to readers of Ariosto, whose 'sedentary' nature is tantamount to a critical commonplace. This feeling, which the poet very likely actually experienced during his travels, is (indirectly) recorded in satira III, where – above all the other advantages offered by his new condition as courtier of Duke

[58] *Fur*., XXXIX 21,1-4 AB; XLIII C: 'Ella sapea d'incanti e di malie / quel che saper ne possa alcuna maga: / rendea la notte chiara, oscuro il die, / fermava il sol, facea la terra vaga'. As noted by Stimato 2011, 47, Ariosto drew on Ovid, *Met*., VII 690-862, where, in the tale of Cephalus and Procris (arguably the inspiration for the tale of the 'nappo') these abilities are attributed to Aurora.
[59] See Delcorno Branca 2007, 131-133; Stimato 2011 and Delcorno Branca 2019, 18-22.

Alfonso – he prizes the greater 'settledness' it guarantees, which he evokes through an affectionate mention of his home as the 'native nest' where the heart always dwells (an obvious allusion to his beloved Alessandra) even if his physical body is removed from it:

> Chi vuole andare a torno, a torno vada:
> veggia Inghelterra, Ongheria, Francia e Spagna;
> a me piace abitar la mia contrada. (*Sat*., III 55-57)

> Il servigio del Duca, da ogni parte
> che ci sia buona, più mi piace in questa:
> che dal nido natio raro si parte.
> Per questo i studi miei poco molesta,
> né mi toglie onde mai tutto partire
> non posso, perché il cor sempre ci resta. (Ibid., 67-72)

Nevertheless, I believe that, unlike what happens with the satira, where the motif of attachment to his birthplace is functional to a specific characterization of the satiric persona as 'Ludovico della tranquillità' (to quote a fortunate definition by Baldini 1933),[60] it is the geographical reference that prevails in the capitolo, where it is accompanied and emphasized by the literary memory. This allusion to Ferrara, to my mind, falls neatly into the courtly context and into its logics of homage.

5. The Garfagnana

In capitolo XXIX (*Meritamente hora punir mi veggio*), the lyric voice is apparently speaking from the mid-point of a journey that will separate him from his beloved. To add to his pain, a storm has just begun, but he cannot find any shelter on his road because he finds himself in a place described as wild and mountainous. The widely held view that the poem may refer to one of Ariosto's journeys to the Garfagnana seems definitely persuasive. In fact, in order to reach that subregion of Tuscany one had to descend the

[60] It should be noted that this self-representation finds its precise literary antecedents within the satiric genre, both in its classical declension (Horace) and in its vernacular development (Paganelli). See Campeggiani's commentary in Ariosto 2019, 105 footnote 17.

Apennines through the steep San Pellegrino Pass (‘ruïnosi balzi’, 24; ‘per lungo trato il monte hor scende hor poggia’, 30), crossing an area that was, and still is, densely wooded (‘folto / bosco’, 25-26) and sees the confluence of two waterways, the Serchio and the Turrita (‘fiumi’, 43).

Because this very setting is shared by satira IV, this is the Ariosto poem that most justifiably invites comparison with the *Satire*; but before examining these similarities, I shall first briefly describe its style and the characteristics it shares with the other three capitoli examined before.

5.1. Classical echoes

Just as in XLIII, Ariosto here explicitly sets up an opposition between the call of duty (‘altrui prece’, 4) and personal desire (‘mio desir proprio’, 6). The other conspicuous similarity with XLIII is that both are the fruit of a combination of personal experience and a re-writing of the classics. Indeed, the situation described is the same as in Propertius I 17, whose opening line (‘Et merito, quoniam potui fugisse puellam!’) is also clearly echoed in the *incipit*:

> Meritamente hora punir mi veggio
> del grave eror che a dipartir mi fece
> da la mia donna, et degno son di peggio. (*Rime,* XXIX 1-3)

In the Latin poem, the speaker has been shipwrecked and reads the event as a revenge Cynthia has taken on him for being abandoned. Ariosto’s lyric voice also feels that he has been punished for wronging the woman (‘contra lei più pecchi’, 7), although he, unlike Propertius, does not explicitly characterise her as ‘sadistic’.

The classical imitation extends to some other devices, such as this description of a sudden wake-up call that interrupts the speaker's flow of thoughts:

> Mentre ch'io parlo il turbido austro prende
> maggior possanza, et cresce il verno, et sciolto
> da ruïnosi balzi il liquor scende (*Rime*, XXIX 22-24)

The initial syntagm of this passage echoes many Ovidian places: 'dum loquor hora fugit' (*Amores*, I 11,15); 'Sed iam pompa venit' (*Amores*, III 2,43); 'Dum loquor, increvit latis spatiosior undis' (*Amores*, III 6,85);[61] 'Dum loquor, et timeo pariter cupioque repelli, / increpuit quantis viribus unda latus!' (*Tristia*, I 4,23-24). Ariosto could also remember a rewriting of them from Petrarch (*Rvf*, LVI 3: 'ora mentre che parlo il tempo fugge'), in its turn imitated by many authors including Lorenzo de' Medici (*Canzoniere*, CXX 12: 'Mentre che io parlo, e lor sen vanno in vento') and Tebaldeo (*Rime della vulgata*, 58,12-13: 'Mentre ch'io parlo […] il tempo passa'): but the use Ariosto makes of the adverb 'mentre', producing the effect of pulling the reader into a story, makes him closer to the classical elegy and to its Latin Humanistic imitations, among which I will mention a poem by Ercole Strozzi ('Dum loquor, heu diversus abis, rogo navita siste';[62] the context sees Ercole begging the rower of his lady's ship, which is sailing away, to stop).

Besides using the Latin elegy to achieve the effect of a 'simultaneous narrating', Ariosto adopts frequent leaps in time, backwards and forwards: the speaker first recollects the circumstances of his promise ('Ben poco saggio fui che all'altrui prece, / a cui devea et potei chiuder l'orecchi, / più ch'al mio desir proprio satisfece', 4-6) and then envisages his future life in the Garfagnana (52-70; see below ll. 55-58). He even makes a foray into the dimension of impossible desire, in a passage in which he wishes that the journey may

[61] Floriani 1988*bis*, 252.
[62] Strozzi 1513, I 62*v*.

bring the lovers together instead of separating them, and evokes the image of their encounter:

> ché se a Madonna io m'appressasi quanto
> me ne dilungo, et fusse speme al fine
> del rio camin poi respirarle a canto,
> et le man' bianche più che fresche brine
> baciarle […] (*Rime*, XXIX 37-41)

Ariosto, however, does not forget the Quattrocento manner. The *dipartita* tradition is echoed by him in the *pathos* of the description of the speaker's sorrow in the last section of the poem (see below, ll. 55-58 and, as one possible term of comparison, Tebaldeo, *Rime della vulgata*, 285,142-143: 'Morto costui, non vissi lieto una hora / né vivrò'), while the last image, an arrow shot from a bow symbolising the wasteful passage of time ('vedea fuggir più che da corda strale', 70), parallels two lines of Boiardo's *Tarocchi*: '[…] 'l tempo, tanto prezioso e caro, / via manda come corda d'arco un strale'.[63]

5.2. Hypotheses on chronology

As I mentioned before, the setting links this poem with satira IV. In the latter, as is known, Ariosto offers an account of the difficulties that he faced during his three-year commissionership in the Garfagnana, telling the reader that one year has elapsed since he took up the position (that is, on 7 February 1522), and that, during that time, his discomfort prevented him from writing any poetical work (*Sat*., IV 13-15: 'E questo in tanto tempo è il primo motto / ch'io fo alle dee che guardano la pianta / de le cui frondi

[63] Both invest a simile very frequent in Dante with a new nuance of meaning; see at least *Inf*., VIII 13: 'Corda non pinse mai da sé saetta'; XVII 136: 'si dileguò come da corda cocca'. Note that the motif of the winter journey might also remind readers of an Occitan line of tradition taken up by Boiardo in a famous poem (except that in Boiardo the journey would bring him back to his beloved): 'Con qual piogia noiosa e con qual vento / Fortuna a lo andar mio si fa molesta! / Gelata neve intorno a me tempesta / aciò che io giunga al mio desir più lento. / Et io del ciel turbato non pavento, […]' (*Amorum libri tres* I 47,1-5). In turn, this passage shares links with an elegy by Tito Vespasiano Strozzi: see Tissoni Benvenuti 2003, 96.

io fui già così giotto'). Most critics[64] accept that the journey referred to in the capitolo is the same as that described in the satira.[65] An entirely different chronology had been proposed by Catalano, who placed the capitolo in relation to a smaller errand run by Ariosto in February or March 1509.[66] This position is based on the situation described: the speaker says he is travelling to fulfil the pleas of an unnamed person ('all'altrui prece', 4), and this does not reflect – Catalano writes – the events of 1522, when Ariosto himself asked his lord to be given the commissionership (on account of his financial difficulties). This argument is not entirely satisfactory, for reasons I will discuss later; conversely, I find convincing Fatini's arguments supporting the opposite thesis:[67] first, the poem seems to describe a permanent move rather than a short trip ('Languido il resto de la vita mia / si struggerà di stimulosi affanni, / percosso ognhor di penitentia ria', 61-63); moreover, overall the 1522 event would probably lend itself to a 'dramatic' poetic use far more than a routine trip would do.

There are, indeed, other clues to support the 1522 chronology. One is the fact that the most ancient among its testimonies is **Vr**,[68] which allows us to suppose that it was written purposely for the sylloge – and therefore, late in the 1520s.[69] Some stylistic and lexical hints, too, suggest this dating. For instance, the setting is described with a similar choice of words both in the capitolo and in satira IV; moreover, in both texts the description of the landscape is closely associated with the mention of 'maraviglia':

[64] Finazzi 2002-2003, 252; see also Corsaro 1976, Cabani 2016*bis*, Marini 2018.
[65] To be more precise, Santoro dated it to 1523 (taking as truth Ariosto's assertion, in satira IV, on his lack of creativity during the 1522-1523 year), whereas Segre, trusting in its 'simultaneous narrating', claimed (like Fatini before him) that it was written right during the journey of 1522 (see Bianchi's commentary for details).
[66] Catalano 1930-1931, I, 417.
[67] Fatini 1934, 185.
[68] Apart from the main testimonies, it is included only in manuscript **P3**, which however, according to Finazzi (who, in turn, follows Chittolina's conclusions: Finazzi 2002-2003, 179), is a *descriptus* of the *editio princeps*.
[69] It should be noted that Ariosto seems to have drawn on this capitolo in an episode that is part of the 1532 additions to the *Furioso*, namely, the description of Bradamante's journey towards Tristan's castle: this link has been noted and illustrated by Cabani 2016*bis*, 29-30.

> […] *maraviglia*
> abbi che morto io non sia ormai di rabbia
> vedendomi lontan cento e più miglia,
> e da *neve, alpe, selve e fiumi* escluso
> da chi tien del mio cor sola la briglia. (*Sat*., IV 20-24)
>
> Pentomi, et col pentir mi *maraviglio* (*Rime,* XXIX 16)
>
> ché se a Madonna io m'appressasi […]
> poco *il mal tempo et lothi et sassi et fiumi*
> mi darian noia, e mi parrebbon piani
> et più che prati molli erte et cacumi. (Ibid., XXIX 37-45; emphasis mine)

Some of the lexical choices in the capitolo, moreover, chime with changes made by Ariosto starting from the 1521 *Furioso*. For instance, the description of the speaker's discomfort:

> Giù dagli occhi rigando per le gote
> sparge un fiume di lacrime sul petto:
> sospira e geme, e va con spesse ruote
> di qua di là tutto cercando il letto;
> *e più duro ch'un sasso*, e più pungente
> che se fosse d'urtica, se lo sente. (*Fur*., XXIII 122,3-8 BC)
>
> altre pioggie al coperto, altre tempeste
> di suspire et de lachryme mi aspetto,
> che mi sien più continue et più moleste.
> *Duro serammi più che sasso il letto* (*Rime,* XXIX 55-58)

Also the rhyme *fiumi* : *cacumi* (43-45) is introduced in the *Furioso* only from the 1521 edition onwards (XXVII 35,2-4: *fiume* : *cacume*; there are no other occurrences for the word 'cacume' in Ariosto's oeuvre), and the syntagm 'travagli e pene' ('al fin di queste / pene et travagli, altri travagli et pene', 53-54) is added to the 1521 version (XXXIX 97,4 B; XLIII 101,4 C), in substitution of the singular form (XXXIX 97,4 A: 'che gran

travaglio m'havea dato e pena').[70] The adjective 'stimulosi' (62) should also be highlighted: in the first two versions of the *Furioso* it appears in the same rhyme pattern of the capitolo, *anni*: *stimulosi affanni*: *vanni* (XVIII 63 AB); the author then dismisses it in the 1532 version ('in stimulo e in affanni' is substituted for it at XX 63,3 C).[71]

If the 1522 hypothesis is correct, the poem has to be referred to the most difficult phase of Ariosto's service of Duke Alfonso, when he was given the unwelcome task of bringing order to a border region infested by brigands, whose people were unused to obeying orders. His letters to the duke reveal his sense of impotence, but also a profound sense of duty, which led him to complete his task with both humanity and moral rigourousness. This period left a visible trace on the poetry he produced during that period, which has been newly assessed over the last few years (not just the *Satire*, but also the *Cinque canti*): capitolo XXIX may be seen as one more piece of this mosaic, a demonstration that he was also active on the lyric front.[72]

5.3. Observations on capitolo XXIX and satira IV

Ariosto's demonstrable poetic activity during his stay in Garfagnana contradicts the claims made in satira IV that he received no creative inspiration in that place (see above). Such claims, however, appertain to the 'fictional' elements of the *Satire*, which sought to create a specific type of first-person speaker – one besieged by an 'accerchiamento claustrofobico'[73] and by the sense of anguish that such an 'infernal' place communicated to him. As shown by Marini, other elements in satira IV may also be ascribed to the

[70] The latter form is predominant throughout the *Orlando furioso* (indeed the singular form of the syntagm has six occurrences in 1516, five in 1521 and again six in 1532).
[71] The adjective is, however, kept by Ariosto in *Fur*., XL 67,2 C: 'la vigilante e stimulosa cura'.
[72] The most recent historical study is Baja Guarienti 2018. Cabani 2016*bis* tackles the subject from a literary point of view, comparing satira IV to Ariosto's letters. To these should be added Marini's study on the fourth satira (Marini 2018 and his commentary to the satira in Ariosto 2019) and Campeggiani 2017, especially the section on the *Cinque canti* (the scholar shows that Ariosto's stay in Garfagnana provides essential information to establish their chronology).
[73] Marini 2018, p. 8.

universe of self-fashioning rather than to Ariosto's actual biography; for example, his understated self-presentation as governor unsuited to his role and actually scared of undertaking it. This is a different portrayal from that which emerges from his letters,[74] and is a strategy that obeys to the constraints of the satirical genre.

The speaker of capitolo XXIX is also modelled according to the rules of the (lyric) genre, and in partial conflict with the biographical truth. At the *incipit*, he says that he has set off to fulfil 'l'altrui prece': this point was used by Catalano to exclude the 1522 dating; the scholar, however, did not consider the possibility that this may be a fictional claim – and one better fitted to the elegy at that, as it represents the speaker as a 'victim' of the surrounding people and circumstances. As may be expected, in the satira Ariosto proposes a different (and probably closer to the truth) version of the situation, which emphasizes his own responsibility in obtaining the commissionership: since the Duke had suspended his salary due to the financial insolvency of the Estense state, Ariosto asked for financial help, making himself available to undertake any task (172-186). This version allows the satirical 'I' to articulate a moral reflection on the courtly relationship, and to describe himself as poised between gratitude for the 'dono' and the fact that such a gift constitutes, in Marini's words, 'una vera e propria violenza alla natura intima dell'io ariostesco'.[75]

As in the pair constituted by capitolo XLIII and satira I, in this case, too, the different fashion of the speakers translates into a different treatment of the temporal dimension. While in the capitolo Ariosto makes us believe he is writing in real time, endowing the circumstance he describes with a chronicle-like feel, in the satira he presents us with a stabilized situation, which he analyses at a year's distance through the lens of the experience matured over time.

[74] Ibid., 12-13.
[75] Ariosto 2019, 159. See *Sat*., IV 199-201: Obligo gli ho del buon voler, più ch'io / mi contenti del dono, il quale è grande, / ma non molto conforme al mio desio'.

On the other hand, the fact that satira IV in its turn displays some lyric-elegiac influences[76] brings to light some striking similarities with the capitolo: it is here that we find most fully articulated the theme of nostalgia, both for Alessandra (the aforementioned ll. 20-24, which betray his sense of desperation at being separated from her, are a case in point) and for his homeland, the only place where he can find that peace so favourable to poetry (this theme is developed, at ll. 115-132, into an emotionally charged recollection of his hometown, Reggio Emilia). Furthermore, as observed by Marini, the description of the Garfagnana landscape is similarly based on a prominent use of deictic expression.[77]

Ultimately, the chronological proximity between the two poems justifies their mutual influences, and at the same time allows us to gain a better understanding of the border that separates the two genres, as it was perceived by Ariosto.

Some closing observations may now be made. I have shown that in XXIX Ariosto resorts to a narrative technique similar to the other poems examined in this chapter, and ideally suited to a courtly destination: but, if it is already impossible to prove that these other poems were actually circulating at court, we find this to be even more impossible in the case of XXIX. Rather, it was probably written for **Vr**, in order to add a new element to a repertory of similar situations, narrated with a similar technique (it is no coincidence that it should be placed right before XXX).

Finally, the fact that he wrote this poem after the first three satire (and probably also after V)[78] is also extremely significant, in that it prompts us to challenge the commonly held view according to which the capitoli merely herald the *Satire* (in Bologna's words,

[76] See again Marini's commentary in Ariosto 2019, 139.
[77] Marini 2018, 6-7. For instance, see *Sat*., IV 4-6 (emphasis mine): '*qui* scesi, dove da diversi fonti / con eterno rumor confondon l'acque / la Tùrrita col Serchio fra duo ponti'; 142-144: '*Questa* è una fossa, ove abito, profonda, / donde non muovo piè senza salire / del silvoso Apennin la fiera sponda'.
[78] That V predates the other satire has been recently demonstrated, through a stylistic analysis, by Campeggiani 2018.

'per Ariosto l'esperienza del capitoli precederebbe immediatamente quella della satira, e […] fungerebbe quasi da laboratorio formale per la messa a punto della nuova struttura'),[79] showing how in fact Ariosto was still experimenting with the lyric genre while in the middle of a new project.

6. Portrait of the speaker as a lover

Now that each of the four capitoli has been analysed, it is possible to concentrate on a number of key concepts that are systematically deployed throughout them. I will focus, in particular, on the 'moral' contents, showing how they contribute to the representation of the poetic persona as a lover, and resorting to further comparisons with the ethical system developed in the *Satire*.

6.1. Moral vocabulary

That Ariosto wished to display a moral intention is evident from his pervasive use of a lexical repertoire related to the idea of 'error'. The words adopted assume different nuances, from that of transgression to that of sin, and are flanked by others conveying the concept of punishment (Ariosto's use of this rhetoric, however, is essentially 'lay', lacking as it does any explicit religious intention):

> XXIX: 'Meritamente […] punir' (1); 'grave eror' (2); 'ben poco saggio fui che all'altrui prece […] più ch'al mio desir proprio satisfece' (4-6); 'pecchi' (7); 'pena' (8); 'Pentomi […] pentir' (16); 'mal consiglio' (18); 'penitentia ria' (63)
> XXX: 'da penitentia et da dolor oppresso'; 'più a l'altrui che al mio desir m'atenni' (66)
> XLIII: 'la colpa mia' (30); 'Tal fallo poi di punition sì grave / punisce' (40-41);

[79] Bologna 1998, 22.

'perdonar […] offesa' (44); 'inobedientia' (49).
XLV: 'errore' (63)

As I mentioned before, the Quattrocento capitolo regularly displayed moral contents, articulated in the form of proverbs or sententious phrases expressing general truths:[80]

Chi ha tempo e 'l ben non usa, in tutto el perde,
dir se suon un proverbio antico, e vero
coglier se vol el fior mentre l'è verde (Sasso, capitolo IV, 1-3)

Although he was certainly inspired by this moralizing tendency, Ariosto does not simply replicate it. Indeed, his moral outlook was also influenced by his Humanistic training, and in particular, by the 'practical' ethic of *exemplum* (this very word occurs at XXIX, 9, where the author wishes 'che nel mio *exempio* ogni amator si specchi'). This was extremely popular in the culture of Ferrara thanks to the influence of Erasmus[81] and to literati such as Alberti, Collenuccio, Calcagnini – all of whom drew on the models of Aesop (whose fables, translated into Latin, were enjoying a great circulation) and of Lucian.[82] The fact that Ariosto, too, was inspired by this undercurrent is demonstrated, first and foremost, by his adoption of the apologue, which may be viewed as an expansion of the *exemplum* into the narrative form proper.[83] In the *Satire* we can find four of such fables, which illustrate the moral truths underlying the poems in which they are placed, and help decipher their overall meaning.[84]

[80] This is also due to the influence of the genre of the frottola (Tissoni Benvenuti 2000, 304-305).
[81] On the circulation of Erasmus's works in Ferrara, see Seidel Menchi 1987.
[82] On this point, see D'Ascia 1998; Tissoni Benvenuti 2004; Villa 2000, *passim*. On the Ferrarese vernacularization (probably by Leoniceno) of Lucian's *A True Story*, and on its influence on Ariosto, see Acocella 2018; also on Lucian's influence on Ariosto, see Jossa 2018.
[83] See D'Ascia 1998.
[84] An examination of these is in Villa 2000; each of them, moreover, is throroughly discussed in Ariosto 2019.

Even when Ariosto does not deploy the apologue itself, yet he often makes use of a typical feature of that genre, i.e. the animal imagery as a medium for conveying moral or psychological contents: this is demonstrated by the high number of *exempla* involving animals (mainly in the form of similes and metaphors) that appear in the *Furioso*, where their function is hardly ever strictly ornamental and aims instead at giving deeper insight into a character's personality. As Delcorno points out,[85] Ariosto could gather direct inspiration for many of these from a large repertoire that included not only Medieval bestiaries and chivalric literature (which had already absorbed this tradition from the classics), but also the 'nobler' Humanistic strand that has just been mentioned.

In the capitoli, an interesting example occurs at the beginning of XLV. The poet compares his own situation to that of a wounded bear, whose clumsy attempts to alleviate the pain do nothing but increase his suffering:

> O vera o falsa che la fama suone,
> i' odo dir che l'orso ciò che trova
> quand'è ferito, in la piaga si pone:
> hor un'herba, hor un'altra, et talhor prova
> et stecchi et spini et sassi et acqua et terra,
> che affligon sempre, et nulla mai gli giova.
> Vol pace et egli sol si fa la guerra;
> cerca da sé scacciar l'aspro martire,
> et egli è quel che se lo chiude et serra.
> Ch'io sia simile a lui ben posso dire,
> ché, poi che Amor ferimmi, mai non cesso
> a nuovi impiastri le mie piaghe aprire (*Rime*, XLV 1-12)

In addition to recalling the Quattrocento capitolo, this passage may remind the reader of the following gnomic tercets of satira III, in which the speaker also resorts to animal similes, albeit in a different context (he is illustrating the difference between himself and his fellow courtiers, in their ability to adapt to the duties of courtly life):

[85] Delcorno 1989, 317-319.

Non si adatta una sella o un basto solo
ad ogni dosso; ad un non par che l'abbia,
all'altro stringe e preme e gli dà duolo.
Mal può durar il rosignuolo in gabbia,
più vi sta il gardelino, e più il fanello;
la rondine in un dì vi mor di rabbia. (*Sat*., III 34-39)

Another significant passage is the end of XLIII. The poet is here envisaging the epitaph he would like to have carved upon his grave. In doing so, he continues to follow Tibullus (see above), but drops his model in the animal imagery deployed by the epitaph to describe his absence from his beloved:

la causa del mio mal si legga chiara:
come né pesce a l'aqua, né alla terra
talpe, né al fuoco le piral remote,
così né anchor chi questo marmo serra
viver lontan da la sua donna puote. (*Rime,* XLIII, 93-97)

Fishes and moles, together with other animals like falcons or bears, are commonly featured in the moralistic sections of Quattrocento capitoli;[86] this does not hold true for the 'piral', which are instead very rare, and consequently were left out by Ariosto in the final version of the poem (in this way, however, he also rendered less understandable the implicit outcome of this set of similes, namely the identification of the woman as air).[87] The 'pirali', or 'pirausta', was a fictional creature, whose birth and life in fire was first described by classical authors. That Ariosto should prefer it to the (more common) salamander[88] is perhaps motivated by the influence of an adage by Erasmus, *Pyraustae interitus*. Only in its final version (1536) will Erasmus explicitly recommend its adoption

[86] Sasso, capitolo XXXVI 165-166: 'l'orso sta bene in selva, in acqua el pesce, / el falcon non è bon da porre in gabbia'; Correggio, *Rime,* 35,5-6: 'Che senza alito in aqua viva il pesce / e talpa in terra' (the latter two are quoted in Finazzi 2002-2003, 280).
[87] In the final version, included in **F**, lines 94-97 are: 'né senza morte talpe da la terra, / né mai pesce da l'acqua si disgiunge / né poté anchor che questo marmo serra / da la sua bella donna viver lunge'.
[88] See, for instance, Tebaldeo, *Rime della vulgata*, 282,1-4: cum quel dolor che l'amate aque lassa / pesce iretito e salamandra il foco, / che è tal che in breve la lor vita passa, / cum quel da te mi parto'.

to convey the impossibility of living away from one's homeland;[89] this meaning, however, was already clear in the version Ariosto could consult, where Erasmus had given some instructions on the use of this symbolic image ('Quod si placet ad hoc referre adagium, convenient et in eos […] qui celeriter intereunt').[90] The mention of this animal is, therefore, a clear symbol for nostalgia, which further enhances the role of the feeling of homesickness as a dominant theme of the capitolo (see above).

6.2. Error and folly between the capitoli and the *Satire*

If we now return to the vocabulary related to the idea of 'error', shown at the beginning of 6.1, one may note that those words are also recurrent in the *Satire*. Here, the concept of moral error, whose outcome may easily be 'madness', is crucial – indeed, the fragile balance between reason and madness is a cornerstone in the structure of the satirical 'macrotext'.[91]

However, if we look at the meaning that the adopted words are given, they turn out to be very different between the two genres. Indeed, the *Satire* always denote as error/madness the poet's transgression of (or his desire to transgress) his duties and more generally the value system within which he is placed, while in the capitoli what is defined as error/madness is, conversely, the accomplishment of those duties.

Let us look at some examples from the *Satire* first. In satira II Ariosto, talking of his attempts to obtain the benefice of St Agata, signals to his readers that it is highly probable that he may be judged 'folle' for not fully embracing a career in the church:

[89] *Adagia*, 851: '[…] Nec invenuste deflecteretur in eos, qui nusquam vivere possunt nisi in propria patria. Si contingat agere peregre, rebus omnibus offenduntur'.
[90] Erasmus 1508, 98*r*, and Erasmus 1514, 134*r*. Significantly, the latter edition was printed only seven months before the journey whose interruption occasioned this poem, and by Giovanni Mazocco, who was also the editor of the 1516 *Furioso* (on his activity, see Jossa 2019).
[91] See the commentaries to satire I, II, IV, VII (by Russo, Crimi, Marini, and Berra respectively) in Ariosto 2019 (and their bibliography); see also Ferroni 1975, 73-92; Galbiati 1987, 10-11; Berra 2010, 175-177.

Questa opinïon mia so ben che folle
diranno molti, che a salir non tenti
la via ch'uom spesso a grandi onori estolle. (*Sat.*, II 142-144)

The incipit of satira I must also be mentioned: commenting on his decision not to follow Cardinal Ippolito to Hungary, the speaker calls himself 'pazzo', for having broken the fundamental rule of courtly life in failing to bend his will to that of his lord:

Pazzo chi al suo signor contradir vole,
se ben dicesse c'ha veduto il giorno
pieno di stelle e a mezzanotte il sole. (*Sat*., I 10-12)

Another relevant example is in the fourth satira, the one on his stay in Garfagnana. The poet imagines the rebuke he might receive by an unnamed friend for his continuous complaining, and instead praises the wisdom of the addressee Sigismondo Malaguzzi (emphasis mine):

– Guata poco cervel! – poi diria seco
– degno uom da chi esser debbia un popul retto,
uom che poco lontan da cinquanta anni
vaneggi nei pensier di giovinetto! –
E direbbe il Vangel di san Giovanni;
che, se ben *erro*, pur non son sì losco
che 'l mio *error* non conosca e ch'io nol danni. (*Sat*., IV 30-36)

Tu forte e *saggio*, che a tua posta muovi
questi affetti da te, […] (Ibid., 40-41)

perciò non dico né a difender tolgo
che non sia *fallo* il mio; […] (Ibid., 52-53)

It goes without saying that in all these cases self-accusation of madness is a rhetorical tool in the service of irony and unmasking: 'isola il protagonista in un esclusivo mondo alla rovescia, la cui ammissione equivale in realtà a una condanna degli altri, i veri folli'.[92]

[92] Berra 2000, 175.

Ariosto's protested madness is thus a *follia savia*, borrowed from the satiric genre (specifically in its Horatian declension), and it is clear that his decision not to conform is a conscious one, pursued in the name of values such as personal freedom (satira I) or the weakness engendered by excessive love, which is nevertheless wholeheartedly embraced (as in satira IV, where love is ironically defined through the metaphor of poison: 'Ma che giova s'io 'l danno e s'io 'l conosco, / se non ci posso riparar, né truovi / rimedio alcun che spenga questo tòsco?', 37-39):

> S'io ti fossi vicin, forse la mazza
> per bastonarmi piglieresti, tosto
> che m'udissi allegar che ragion pazza
> non mi lasci da voi viver discosto. (*Sat*., VII 178-181)

> Ma chi fu mai sì saggio o mai sì santo
> che di esser senza macchia di pazzia
> o poca o molta, dar si possa vanto?
> Ogniun tenga la sua, questa è la mia: (*Sat*., II 148-151)

As I anticipated before, the same keywords that in the *Satire* indicate (or appear to indicate) as a mistake the speaker's successful attainment of his personal desires (aiming instead to unmask the opposite route as a mistake), are used in the capitoli with what would appear to be the opposite objective: that is, they serve to mark as error or folly any attitude that opposes or contravenes these very desires.

For instance, 'fallo', a keyword of satira IV, is also in capitolo XLIII (see above and 3.1), where it denotes the speaker's neglect of love in favour of court duties. But in particular, the passage from satira IV quoted above openly contrasts with the incipit of capitolo XXIX (its 'twin', as they share the Garfagnana setting), in which the lack of wisdom lamented by Ariosto consists in the fact that he agreed to leave (emphasis mine):

> Meritamente hora punir mi veggio
> del *grave eror* che dipartir mi fece
> da la mia donna, et degno son di peggio.

Ben *poco saggio* fui che all'altrui prece,
a cui devea et potei chiuder l'orecchi,
più ch'al mio desir proprio satisfece. (*Rime,* XXIX 1-6)

This different use of the same lexical repertoire is one of the clearest consequences of the different self-fashioning of the speaker in the satira and the capitolo. In the latter, the subject takes up all the space: all external matters are subordinated to his needs, and the only value to which he pays obeisance – and which marks every alternative choice as an error – is love (all references to the desire for independence, for the quiet life or indeed to his work as a poet are here silenced).

This fact, however, should not lead us to think that Ariosto's intentions in the capitolo are openly critical; the opposite is in fact true. It is clear that as he voices these opinions the speaker is not applying lucid reason and the parameters by which he is judging are blurred by his being in the thrall of the irrationality engendered by love.

To understand this point, it may be useful to return to the *exemplum* of the bear which opens capitolo XLV. The bear is probably the animal that features most prominently among the metaphors and similes of the *Furioso*. It is exploited in its polyvalent symbolic meaning, as a symbol for wrath or for uncontrolled lust;[93] but what matters is that in each of these cases (for example, in the scene of Ruggiero's attempted rape of Angelica,[94] or in similes concerning Rodomonte and Orlando) it denotes loss of rationality. The image of the bear in the capitolo clearly obeys the same strategy of representation: from the outset of the poem, the lyric voice is placed under the sign of love's irrationality, also implying sexual desire. He thus sets the tone for the entire capitolo, which should be read as a poem on insane passion, a force that can lead to a reversal of well-established values

[93] Delcorno 1989, 319. A famous precedent for the poetic use of the bear image with these meanings is Dante, *Rime*, 46,70-71: 'E non sarei pietoso né cortese / anzi farei com'orso quando scherza' (precisely on this comparison, see Martinez 1993).
[94] *Fur*. XI 1,5-8 ABC: '[…] a guisa d'orso / che dal mel non sì tosto si distolga, / poi che gli n'è venuto odore al naso, / o qualche stilla ne gustò sul vaso'.

and obligations. The fact itself that he chooses warfare as a remedy for love is irrational (as irrational, too, is the statement on the preferability of a state of sickness in capitolo XLIII): the adoption of the word 'contrario' (l. 22, see 2.2) is meaningful, and suggests an upside-down vision of reality.

In capitolo XXIX the poet is also trapped in a distorted logic, so much so that he regards the undertaking of his duties as a mad decision, into which he has been tricked by a 'bad advice' ('come io potessi uscir sì di me stesso / ch'io mi appigliasse a questo *mal consiglio*').[95] Incidentally, this reading further permits to neutralize Catalano's reservations about the 1522 dating: the fact that Ariosto represents himself as insane permits him to alter the biographical occurrence, by passing off his own request to Alfonso I as if it had been Alfonso's order.

Later in the same poem, the envisaging of future sleepless nights ('Duro serammi più che sasso il letto', 58) finds a parallel in the three episodes of love madness of the *Furioso*, those of Orlando, Bradamante and Rodomonte, all of which feature references to a bed, probably (as suggested by Weaver) also hinting at the idea of unsatisfied desire.[96] Moreover, the rhyme between 'tempeste' and 'moleste' (55-57; see above) possibly echoes the fifth canto of the *Inferno*, which famously deals with the punishment of carnal lust (29-33: *tempesta* : *molesta*).

In capitolo XXX, the narrator even goes as far as cursing himself, together with the person who commissioned his journey to Florence, and his travelling companion:

[95] The speaker's supposed foolishness is symbolised by his inability to close his ears to the request received ('a cui devea et potei chiuder l'orecchi', XXIX 5). Conversely, in the *Furioso* the action of closing one's years is attributed to Cardinal Ippolito as an expression of his wisdom: 'o riserbargli almen, fin che presente / sua causa dica, l'altra orecchia chiusa' (*Fur*., XVI 2,3-4 AB; XVIII C). This moral meaning was acknowledged by Fórnari, *Spositione*, I, 373: 'solevano i scultori le statue de' giustissimi principi così alle volte formare, che una mano tenevano a una orecchia supposta, a dinotare che si riserbavano, per più diritta sentenza darne, d'ascoltare anco la contraria parte'.

[96] Weaver 2003, 127-128. The image may also have been suggested to Ariosto by Dante's simile in *Purg*., VI 149-151: 'vedrai te somigliante a quella inferma / che non può trovar posa in su le piume, / ma con dar volta suo dolore scherma'.

> […] ch'odio talor me stesso.
> L'ira, il furor, la rabbia mi conduce
> a biastemar chi fu cagion ch'io venni
> et chi a venir mi fu compagno et duce;
> et me che senza me di me sostenni
> lasciar, ohimè, la meglior parte, il core,
> et più a l'altrui che al mio desir m'atenni. (*Rime,* XXX 60-66)

Besides noting the triple repetition of 'me' at l. 64, which suggests a condition of restlessness, one must remember that the feelings 'ira […] furor […] rabbia' are also displayed by Orlando on the edge of frenzy ('[…] non rimase dramma / di lui ch ira non fusse, odio e furore', *Fur*., XXI 129,6-7 A; '[…] in lui non restò dramma / che non fosse odio, rabbia, ira e furore', XXI 129,6-7 B; XXIII C) and by Bradamante in her jealous rage ('di gelosia, d'ira e di rabbia piena […] ritornò furibonda alla sua stanza', *Fur*., XXX 31,8 A; XXX 35,8 B; XXXII 35,6-8 C).[97]

I also find the use of the word 'biastemar' important, as the act of blaspheming was traditionally associated with the Saracens in chivalric literature and is chosen by Ariosto himself as an identifying trait of Rodomonte: 'che 'l re di Sarza, pien d'ira e di sdegno, / grida e bestemmia, e non può star più a segno' (*Fur*., XII 108,7-8 AB; XIV C); 'egli bestemmia Dio' (*Fur*., XII 117,8 AB; XIV C); 'bestemmia il ciel con spaventoso grido' (*Fur*., XIII 5,8 AB; XV C); 'e bestemmiò l'eterna Ierarchia' (*Fur*., XXI 33,6 AB; XXIII C); 'e lo bestemmia sempre e maledice' (*Fur*., XXI 33,6 AB; XXIII 38,4 C); 'Bestemmiò il cielo e gli elementi' (*Fur*., XXIV 80,1 AB; XXVI 83,1 C). Rodomonte blasphemes also upon dying, which is remarkable because this detail is not featured in the Virgilian source of the episode: 'bestemmiando fuggì l'alma sdegnosa' (*Fur*., XL 112, 7 A; 111,7 B; XLVI 140,7 C). The fact that blasphemy is explicitly associated with Rodomonte, rather than with the Saracens in general, means that Ariosto intended it not as a topic signal for

[97] Note that the word 'rabbia' in 1516 was not in the Orlando episode, and 'ira' was added only to the third version of the Bradamante episode, as though Ariosto's sensitivity towards pathological madness had progressively increased (Weaver 2003, 130).

unbelief, but rather as a symbol of the pathological irrationality that is specific to his personality. And it is significant that the narrator refers the act of blaspheming also to himself, in a proem of the *Furioso*, when he is making excuses for his unfairness to the female sex by comparing himself to a sick person:

> Ma simile son fatto ad uno infermo,
> che dopo molta pazienza e molta,
> quando contra il dolor non ha più schermo,
> cede alla rabbia e a *bestemmiar* si volta. (*Fur*., XXVIII 2,1-4 AB; XXX 2,1-4 C – emphasis mine)

Focusing on this simile and on other comparable passages, Weaver pinpointed the theme of lovesickness as a structural element of the *Furioso*, which causes the narrator and his characters to mirror each other: 'The terminology used to describe the various stages of Orlando's, Bradamante's, and Rodomonte's sickness is, in fact, the same as that used in the proems: disease, internal division and separation from oneself, suppression of reason, and destruction of oneself and of others'.[98] We shall also mention the narrator's complain about his 'perduto ingegno' (*Fur*., XXXII 2 AB; XXXV, C) and the proem to the twenty-fourth canto, where after concluding, commenting upon Orlando's story, that 'non è in somma amor, se non insania', he considers his own situation:

> Ben mi si potria dir: – Frate, tu vai
> l'altrui mostrando, e non vedi il tuo fallo. –
> Io vi rispondo che comprendo assai,
> or che di mente ho lucido intervallo;
> et ho gran cura (e spero farlo ormai)
> di riposarmi e d'uscir fuor di ballo:
> ma tosto far, come vorrei, nol posso,
> che 'l male è penetrato infin all'osso. (*Fur*., XXII 3 AB; XXXIV C)

[98] Weaver 2003, 132.

The amorous illness allows the poet only a respite of lucidity,[99] during which he is able to recognize it, despite however not having the remedy to it. Actually, the register of this octave may resemble some passages of the *Satire*, where, too, the speaker is able to observe his weakness from an 'external' standpoint, and eventually accepts it with an ironic awareness.

It thus becomes clear that the speaker of the capitoli has to be inscribed in the same strategy of representation as a victim of an illness caused by love. This voids any declaration regarding what should be considered a 'mistake', therefore rendering these texts fully acceptable within the courtly scenario.

To sum up, therefore, both in the satire and in the capitoli a 'double level' of self-representation is discernable which explores the confines between values and moral mistakes: in both cases such confines are viewed from the changing perspectives of health and illness, and the letter of the text must be reversed so that the distinguishing traits of each genre may emerge.

6.3. Medicine and lovesickness

In referring to love as a pathology and to himself as being affected by this pathology, Ariosto is complying with a long-established metaphor, pervasive in all literature with elegiac connotations. In the Quattrocento amorous culture, the recourse to a medical terminology was pervasive, and became part of an overall worldview that may be viewed as eclectic or even 'confusa e incerta'[100] precisely on account of its openness to absorb the most varied components. It this context, Ariosto seems to go beyond a generic interest in the metaphorical value of the concepts of illness/medicine, and in addition to the word-

[99] The syntagm Ariosto uses is indebted to a passage of Jerome's life of Lucretius, according to which the poet composed his *De rerum natura* 'per intervalla insaniae'.
[100] Cracolici 2001, 23.

cluster we have seen above, related to the idea of error/madness, many more examples of medical terminology could be produced. Capitolo XXX develops a word pun on the 'Medici' family who cannot be helpful against the author's 'mali' (see 4.2). The theme of infirmity also underlies the whole text of XLIII, in which the real illness of the poet ('Tiemme la febre', 10) is juxtaposed to the illness induced by love, among whose victims are himself and Cardinal Ippolito ('né sano forse anchora hoggi ne sete', 33); emphasis is placed on this motif through the comparison of his own state to that of a sick pilgrim ('Non fu mai sanità che sì giovasse / a peregrino infermo che tra via, / da la patria lontan, compagno lasse […]', 19-21).

Moreover, there are some passages – which I will discuss in the next section – that seem to refer to specific medical issues with which Ariosto was probably familiar. Ferrara was at the time – thanks to figures such as Niccolò Leoniceno or Giovanni Manardi – at the forefront of the development of medical philosophy;[101] in this context, poets and court physicians could easily mingle and exchange ideas – indeed, the role of the latter extended to sharing tasks with other members of the court, and their medical advice to the lord often included more generic advice on the right management of the affairs of state.[102] Ariosto's acquaintance with this milieu is demonstrated, besides his mention of it in the third *Furioso*,[103] by his mockery of it in the controversial prose-speech *Herbolato*, whose speaking subject, a quack who wants to advertise an allegedly miraculous medicine, has been identified as a member of the Studio (although scholars still disagree on his exact identity).[104]

[101] Information on the teaching of medicine at the University of Ferrara may be found in in Grendler 2002, 324-328 and bibliography; Liboni 2018.
[102] See Crisciani's introduction to Crisciani-Zuccolin 2011, VII-XXII.
[103] *Fur*., XLVI 14,7-8 C: 'Veggo il Mainardo, veggo il Leoniceno, / il Pannizzato, e Celio e il Teocreno'.
[104] See Looney 2013, Liboni 2018 and its bibliography.

6.3.1. Treatment by opposite means

Two poems closely interlinked in their use of a medical imagery are capitolo XLV and a sonnet, XXXVIII (*Madonna, io mi pensai che 'l stare absente*) – the latter probably dates to Ariosto's stay in the Garfagnana. Here, the speaker is compelled to stay away from his beloved, and is allowed only to make brief visits to her. These, however, are ineffectual in relieving his pain: actually, they even enhance it. The underlying concept is that a medicine, if administered wrongly, can easily become a deadly poison:

> Giovava il rivedervi, se sì breve
> non era, ma per la partita dura
> mi fu un venen, non che un rimedio leve.
> Così suol trar l'infermo in sepoltura
> interrotto compenso: o non si deve
> incominciare, o non lasciar la cura. (*Rime,* XXXVIII 9-14)

In this poem, the pain is caused by the condition of absence, to which the speaker tries to remedy through its opposite, namely, reconnection. Conversely, in capitolo XLV the lady is characterized as 'cruel' and the pain derives precisely from her proximity: in this latter case, therefore, the speaker aims to fall out of love (I have already mentioned the possible connection of this poem with the antierotic genre) and the situation of absence consequently takes on the role of the proposed remedy.

> Io volsi al fin provar se la partita,
> s'il star da le repulse et sdegni absente
> potessi risanar la mia ferita,
> quando provato havea ch'era possente
> trarmi ad irreparabile ruina
> a voi senza mercé l'esser presente.
> Ché s'un contrario all'altro è medicina
> non so perché, da l'un pigliando forza,
> per l'altro la mia doglia non declina:
> piglia forza da l'uno et non s'ammorza
> per l'altro già; (*Rime,* XLV 16-26)

The theory that seems to be specifically referenced is that of humoralism, namely one of the fundamental components in the theories of Hippocrates and Galen, which constituted the basis for Renaissance medical handbooks. According to that school of thought, disease is the result of a state of imbalance between the four humours which fill the human body (phlegm, blood, black bile, yellow bile), each of which is endowed with two properties (hot/cold and dry/moist). In order to regulate the balance of humours, medical treatises prescribed a treatment by opposite (*contraria contrariis*):[105] exactly the same solution attempted by the speaker of these poems.

6.3.2. Melancholia and *amor hereos*

Another medical concept Ariosto seems to reference is that of *melancholia*, that is, an excessive amount of black bile and/or a combustion of yellow bile, in whose clinical record lovesickness was usually included.[106] The association between the elegiac genre and the representation of the poet-lover as melancholic had held true since antiquity and extended throughout all later manifestations of elegy in literature; moreover, as I said before, Ferrarese writers had at their disposal also the medical treatises, which may provide them the tools to further enrich this concept. It is possible, for instance, that they knew the works of Michele Savonarola, a celebrated court physician in Ferrara in the first half of the fifteenth century, whose *Practica maior* was reprinted many times up to 1560.[107] In it, Savonarola illustrates the concept of *amor hereos*,[108] a concept which

[105] Hippocrates, *Nature of man* 4: 'The treatment carried out should be that opposed to the cause of the disease' (quoted in Nestor 2001, 75). For the theory of humours, and in general for medical theories in the Renaissance, see Klibansky-Panofsky-Saxl 1964; Siraisi 1990; Crisciani 2001; Nestor 2001, 68-135; Zuccolin 2007-2008; Crisciani-Zuccolin 2011, VI-XXII and its rich bibliography.
[106] Among the immense bibliography on this subject, I will mention Klibansky-Panofsky-Saxl 1964 (a seminal overview on the theme of melancholy); for love melancholy in particular, see Ciavolella 1976; Beecher-Ciavolella 1992.
[107] On Savonarola, see Crisciani-Zuccolin 2011; on the *Practica maior*, see Crisciani 2003; Cracolici 2011.
[108] This originated in Aristotelian and Stoic philosophy, and was continued by Avicenna and, in the fifteenth century, by Marsilio Ficino. A general illustration is provided by Ciavolella 1976; Agamben 1977;

entertains a complex and variable relationship with that of melancholy, and presupposes an alteration of the imaginative processes, causing the mind to obsessively focus on a fixed idea. Poetic applications of this concept are extremely frequent in contemporary literature, as may be seen in the following tercet by Correggio:

> e mi facesti qual languido infermo,
> che vede quel che a sua salute è amaro,
> pur l'occhio col pensier lì sempre ha fermo. (Correggio, *Rime*, 212,12-14)

Another representation of the speaker as sharing these typical traits is in Ariosto's capitolo XXX:

> s'in te misero sono,
> se sempre ho il viso mesto e il ciglio basso,
> se de lacrime ho gli ochi humidi spesso,
> se mai senza suspir' non muto il passo? (*Rime*, XXX 54-57)[109]

Also the condition of homesickness, so important in capitoli XXIX, XXX, XLIII (see above) and elsewhere in the late-Quattrocento repertoire,[110] is precisely codified by Savonarola. Indeed, in his illustration of the phenomenon of *ilischi* he specifies that this word, despite being often adopted as a generic synonym of *amor hereos*, originally defined a pathological form of desire ('sollecitudo melancholica') for one's homeland.

Cracolici 2011; Stemmler 1990. Other bibliographical entries, in commentaries to poets of the Middle Ages, are listed by Cracolici 2011, 40 footnote 31.

[109] The concept is here mediated by the Propertian-Petrarchan 'solo et pensoso' *topos* (Petrarch 2005, 190).

[110] See, for example, Correggio, *Rime extravaganti*, VII: 'Dolce mio patrio nido, albergo e vita, / de' mei pianti e suspir fidel ricetto, / ch'io m'avea in vita per sepulcro eletto / come al diserto el povero eremita, / oggi convienmi far da te partita, / né mai più pace in altro loco aspetto. / Addio, delizie mie, dolce studietto! / La nostra compagnia pur è finita. / Amica patria, vale. E voi, mei servi, / restati in pace, e prego ognun che preghi / el caro genitor che in cor mi servi. / Un dolce dire addio non mi si neghi, / quando, rivolta, non potrò vedervi, / e se l'amor non da, pietà vi preghi'; Sasso, capitolo XVIII, 127-138: 'O patria a me soave, e patria degna, / quanto sia grato a ciascuno il suo nido / l'experientia del partir m'insegna / Vera è la fama del publico crido: / troppo è dolce el paese ove l'huom nasce / tanto più quanto è più constante e fido. / Qua fui bagnato, qua fui volto in fasce, / qua presi el primo cibo al viver mio: / questa sola memoria el cor me pasce. / Adio mure alte e ben fondate, adio / lago che spargie intorno le chare onde, / convien che la ragion vinca el desio'.

Savonarola's actually represents one of the earliest descriptions of nostalgia in clinical terms:

> […] Tales quidem secundum plurimum sunt cupientes dominas quas inordinato amore diligent. Dicitur secundum plurimum, quia etiam aliqui non dominas cupiunt, sed reverti ad patriam, quam summe et summe amant. Unde aliqui primam dispositionem nominaverunt hereos, secundam vero, quae est amor repatriandi, ilischi appelaverunt. Ego vero feci ilischi terminum communem.[111]

These examples show that the pairing of lovesickness and nostalgia is rooted in the Quattrocento amorous culture, but also that Ariosto appropriates it more consciously, as a nexus proper.

6.3.3. The cause of / cure to lovesickness: the beloved woman as 'maga'

In these poems, it often happens that the concept of 'love medicine' verges on that of 'love magic'. As noted by Rinaldi, Ariosto sometimes includes figures of the 'sorceress' in his lyric poetry, probably having in mind the myth of Medea (from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*),[112] but also several examples from Ferrarese literature. In the field of treatises, we should mention Calcagnini's *Amatoriae magiae compendium*, dedicated to Niccolò da Correggio, which lists several examples of amorous magic from classical literature.[113] Also in the lyric repertoire, a typical situation is the speaker's attempt of freeing himself from love by resorting to the aid of sorceresses. The possible examples[114]

[111] Savonarola 1486, 63*v*. For the concept of nostalgia in ancient medical literature, see Roscher 1993.
[112] Rinaldi 2000, 317-321.
[113] Calcagnini 1544, 497-503.
[114] See at least Canzoniere Costabili, capitolo 506; Giusto de' Conti, *La bella mano*, capitolo 143; Il Pistoia, *La disperata*, 130-135; Correggio, *Rime*, 358,55-57: 'Non più d'erbe, d'incanti o d'arte maghe / soccorso aspectan le mie ardenti voglie, / ma Morte sol de i suoi desir le paghe'.

include the following sonnet by Boiardo:

> Ma in che me affido, lasso! Che arte maga
> soglia da amore? E non sciolse Medea
> con l'erbe scythe e' canti di Thesaglia!
> Lei non pòte saldar l'ardente piaga
> che avea nel cor, con quanto ella sapea,
> ché contro amor non è forza che vaglia. (*Amorum libri tres*, II 37,9-14)

Ariosto follows this line of tradition in capitolo XLV: the speaker considers even appealing even to 'maghe […] di Tessaglia' (67), who however are too far away, to fall out of love. A very different elaboration of the sorceress theme is in XXX and XLIII: here, it is the beloved woman herself that is defined as such. This is especially evident in XXX, where, as mentioned before, Ariosto adopts a phrasing similar to that used for Melissa, and endows her beloved with abilities typical of the sorceress, namely, that of arresting the sun[115] and of healing with her gaze. In XLIII there is no explicit reference to magic; however, the feverish speaker represents his lady's gaze as having healing powers:

> Che s'ella anchor l'exanimata faccia
> mira, a quel punto ho quasi certa fede
> ch'esser non possa che più il corpo giaccia. (*Rime*, XLIII 73-75)

This image is immediately followed by another metaphor, the lady as Sun.[116] Ariosto here resorts to a mythological comparison: if Prometheus was able to give life to clay, by heating it with sunlight,[117] then he himself, too, could resurrect (this is the passage where the speaker envisions his own death) thanks to the rays coming out from the woman-Sun (76-81). Besides noting that this simile is in line with the popularity of the myth of

[115] Also in a sonnet Ariosto endows his beloved with this feature; see Chapter II, 4.1.
[116] This is in line with the pervasive use of his metaphor in the capitolo: see above.
[117] This detail of the myth follows Boccaccio, *Genealogie deorum gentilium*, IV 44.

Prometheus in the Ferrarese milieu (we may mention again Calcagnini, who also dedicated to Correggio a pamphlet summarizing its several versions),[118] what I would most like to point out is that in these poems the representation of Ariosto's beloved is poised between two metaphors: woman as a natural phenomenon, and as one who controls natural phenomena. This type of fashioning certainly had several precedents, among which should be mentioned a sonnet by Cornazano –[119] but it is possible that the ongoing composition of the *Furioso* also influenced it.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, I should like to return once more to the subject of self-fashioning. We have now shed light on the strategies Ariosto adopted in these poems in order to better manage narrative time and psychological insight; a special role in this is played by the use of biographical circumstances, but also by the imitation of the Latin elegy (in XLIII and XLV); his achievement here is so outstanding that we may speak of a 're-generation' of the elegiac genre, nurtured by a closer contact with its classical origins.

Significantly, this demonstrates, for the elegy as well, the validity of a process which Floriani has pinpointed as being responsible for the birth of Italian satiric poetry. According to him, the development of the sixteenth-century satira was influenced by the Latin literature of the Augustan age: an influence that is especially exerted on the quality of the speaker, who does not limit himself to generic moral precepts but presents himself as a true individual – one who believes in the validity of these precepts, and whose wisdom derives also from his personal experience.

[118] On this pamphlet, see Sandrolini 2004. Prometheus features again in a sonnet by Ariosto: see Chapter II, 4.2.

[119] In Sonnet VIII of the *editio princeps*, the poet says that the woman's faculties combine those of legendary creatures and herbs, i.e. she can kill with her gaze and she is both the cause and the cure of 'fatal heating'. He concludes (10-14): 'Che gli è il suo sguardo la mia sepultura, / et di duo bianche man l'una m'impiaga, / l'altra insensibilmente m'unge e cura: / tale è la incantatrice e la mia magha'.

This new ambition to directly confront Augustan literature is motivated by Floriani with the similarity in the social position of poets in relation to power. The poet, who lived in a centralized state and enjoyed a privileged status, felt the urge to protect his intellectual autonomy; hence his choice to express himself through the satirical form:

> Un carattere proprio dello *speaker* […] della poesia latina, da Catullo all'età imperiale, è il forte tasso di *realismo*. Intendo con questa pregiudicatissima parola indicare […] il fatto che *io* è una realtà testuale che si pone come corrispondente perfetto della realtà biografica del poeta […] Lo *speaker* latino è un cittadino di Roma […] è titolare di una competenza letteraria e insieme di un *ethos*, che gli permette di celebrare i valori pubblici di Roma, ma anche di distinguersi, di esprimere la sua puntuale *recusatio*, quando è in gioco la sua sostanziale autonomia. […] Proprio su questo punto, io dico, fa leva la cultura volgare primo-cinquecentesca per organizzare un rinnovato sistema letterario, alternativo a quello in vigore nella poesia cortigiana tardo-quattrocentesca. […] è ben possibile proiettare sul presente e sul volgare lo schema dello *speaker* antico. Perché, innanzitutto, quella *figura* complessiva trova una corrispondenza larga e significativa nella situazione presente. […][120]

I believe, on the basis of what has been shown throughout this chapter, that a similar process holds true for Ariosto's capitoli.

This said, however, the capitoli and the *Satire* maintain their individual physiognomy, which derives from the different subject matter appertaining to each genre: love vs. moralistic analysis. Moreover, the ethical system expressed in the capitoli is opposite to that which emerges from the *Satire*. Intriguingly, these codes, while opposite, are both generated by an imbalance, an 'out-of-jointness' between the 'letter' and its meaning, and

[120] Floriani 1988, 13-14.

must be read though the trope of 'reversal'. In other words, both genres may be underpinned by the logic of the *spoudaiogeloion* (see Introduction), which sets the rules for Erasmus's and Alberti's concepts of folly,[121] and which most often entailed the description of things through an estranged or reversed perspective.

This may be taken as a sign that, despite the difference in quality of these works, Ariosto's poems are not so far removed, in terms of their conception and underlying culture, from his major works.

[121] On their influence on Ariosto, see Ferroni 1974; Ossola 1976, 171-196; on a comparison between Erasmus's and Ariosto's conception of folly, see also Scianatico 2014, 1-40.

II. Ariosto, the Lyric Lover

0. Preamble

The poems analysed in the previous chapter showed how the speaker of Ariosto's capitoli was entirely moulded by love, a state before which any duty took second place. It is now time to delve deeper into the subject, in order to understand more about the type of love relationship Ariosto envisages in his *rime*.

The importance of this subject can hardly be overstated. Not only is the theme overwhelmingly predominant; it is also attributed a particular complexity. Throughout the poems the reader is shown all the possible degrees and nuances of the experience of love and, as a consequence, is presented with a highly multifaceted speaking subject; this is certainly due to the status of the *corpus* itself as a 'layered' compilation of poems, but it is also a result of both Ariosto's personal inclination (which is also evident from the *Furioso*, in which his propensity to maintain the ambivalence of the emotion of love fully emerges) and of the influences he received.

Ariosto's interest in investigating the 'love cases' emerges already from two capitoli in all likelihood belonging to his youthful output, which were kept in **Vr**. These, capitolo XLIV (*Piaccia a cui piace, et chi lodar vuol lodi*) and capitolo XLVI (*Chi pensa quanto il bel disio d'amore*), share the same structure, and their contents mirror one another: both

are organised as a series of counterarguments on the part of the speaker to objections against his choice of life, for (XLIV) and against love (XLVI) respectively.[1]

Piaccia a cui piace, et chi lodar vuol lodi,
et chiami vita libera et sicura
trovarsi fuor de gli amorosi nodi,
ch'io per me stimo chiuso in sepultura
ogni spirto che alberghi in petto, dove
non stilli Amor la sua vivace cura. (*Rime,* XLIV 1-6)

Chi pensa quanto il bel disio d'amore
un spirto pelegrin tenga sublime,
non voria non haverne acceso il core;
se pensa poi che quel tanto n'opprime
che l'util proprio e il vero ben s'oblia,
piange in van del suo ardor le cagion prime. (*Rime*, XLVI 1-6)

The specularity between the two texts, and their development as lists of arguments in support of opposite theses (set out in the form of an adversarial debate), may be seen as following the genre of the *tenzone*; in addition, it also recalls the dialogue form, and in particular reminds the reader of the *Asolani*.[2] The first book of Bembo's treatise, which articulates Perottino's arguments against love, and the second one, dominated by Gismondo's celebration of it, mirror each other closely in the layout and organization of their contents;[3] they are, therefore, linked in a manner that is very similar to that of Ariosto's capitoli. If we focus on XLVI, furthermore, another genre (which in turn exerted its influence over Bembo) might come to mind: the so-called *dialogo antierotico*, already mentioned in Chapter I. This was especially popular during the Quattrocento (one of its first examples being Alberti's *Deifira*) in particular toward the close of the century (Pietro

[1] Comboni 2000, 298 speaks of a 'disposizione chiastica che lega saldamente i due testi in questione'. Note that in **Vr** the presence of XLV (for which see Chapter I) between the two poems probably aims at anticipating the speaker's renunciation of love in XLVI.
[2] On the dialogic form in Cinquecento love treatises, see Tateo 1990. On the *Asolani* in particular, see also Berra 1996, 45-46, which provides a rich bibliography. On Cinquecento love dialogues, Masi 1996; Favaro 2012.
[3] Berra 1996, 193-194.

Edo's *Antieroticorum libri*, 1492; Battista Fregoso's *Anteros*, 1496). Its interlocutors are typically an 'elegiac' lover, in the thrall of *aegritudo amoris*, and a friend who tries (and often succeeds) to make him fall out of love by means of rational arguments, which are accorded the status of a medical cure (thus explaining the frequent borrowings from Ovid's *Remedia amoris* or from actual medical theories).[4]

The antierotic genre exerted its influence also on a capitolo belonging to the uncollected poems, XXIII ed. Fatini, which is also based on a rigid rhetorical structure: a tercet in which the speaker re-evokes the pain and suffering he has endured on account of his beloved is followed by another in which he spurs himself on to place indignation where once there reigned desperation:

> Non è più tempo ormai sperar ch'io pieghi
> un'alma altiera, un'indurata spoglia,
> con lunga servitù, con lunghi prieghi;
> ma ben tempo è sperar ch'un sdegno scioglia
> il laccio in che mi prese, e, preso, a lei
> mi diede Amor con mia perpetua doglia. (*Rime*, capitolo XXIII ed. Fatini, 1-6)

Another capitolo by Ariosto, also not included in **Vr**, *Sì come a primavera è dato il verno* (XXV ed. Fatini) develops an analytical description of Jealousy, the natural companion of Love; the list of the opposite effects these passions exert on the human soul is framed by an anaphoric pattern:

> Lui [= Amor] con speranza mostra lieta faccia,
> lei [= Gelosia] con desperazion trista ti affronta,
> lui cerca di piacer, lei che dispiaccia.
> Lui quel ch'agrada sol intende e conta,
> lei rapresenta sempre offesa e scorno,
> lui sempre al ben, lei sempre al mal fu pronta. (*Rime*, capitolo XXV ed. Fatini, 7-12)

[4] An analysis of this genre is in Cracolici 2001. On treatises against love in general (not only those adopting the dialogic form), see also Dionisotti 1959, 415-21; Dilemmi 2000*bis*, 236-243.

While the technique of the personification of sentiments was well-established since Late Antiquity, the specific focus on Jealousy, in addition to being a subject particularly dear to Ariost (as shown by its recurrence as a predominant motif in the *Furioso*, where, moreover, it is twice given an actual personified representation)[5] saw a number of antecedents in the Quattrocento tradition; in addition to its description in Lorenzo il Magnifico's *Selve*,[6] and in a number of court authors such as Gaspare Visconti,[7] a capitolo from Boiardo's *Tarocchi* deserves particular mention, as it resembles Ariosto's poem in its use of the anaphora:

> Gelosia un vero amor non po' smarrire,
> ché si uno amante va cum pura fede,
> Amor il premia al fin del suo servire.
> Gelosia è dura cosa, ove esser vede
> commodo al concorrente dello amore:
> ché al spesso supplicar segue merzede. (*Tarocchi*, 4,1-6)

It may be said that Ariosto's analytic take on the subject of love, though prompted by the influence of earlier (or contemporary) authors, gains further complexity on account of what may be termed his own personal poetics. Indeed, it should not escape attention that the rigid rhetorical schemes of the capitoli seen above look odd even by the standards

[5] 'Gelosia' is among the cortege of Discordia in *Fur*., XVI 28-33 AB; XVIII C; it reappers as 'un strano mostro in feminil figura', fighting against Rinaldo, in *Fur*., XXXVIII 43-54 A; XXXVII 46-57 B; XLII 46-57 C. It would be difficult to summarize the importance of the theme of jealousy in Ariosto's narrative; I will only refer to the lenghty narrator's description of its effects on Bradamante in *Fur*., XXIX 1 AB XXXI C: 'Che dolce più, che più giocondo stato / saria di quel d'un amoroso core? / che viver più felice e più beato, / che ritrovarsi in servitù d'Amore? / se non fosse l'uom sempre stimulato / da quel sospetto rio, da quel timore, / da quel martìr, da quella frenesia, / da quella rabbia detta gelosia'.

[6] Lorenzo de' Medici, *Selva seconda*, 39-49; see in particular 46: 'D'ombre vane e pensier tristi si pasce: / rode un cor sempre l'infelice bocca; / e come è consumato, allor rinasce: / o miser quel a cui tal sorte tocca! / Nelle sue prime cune e nelle fasce, / nel petto tristo invidia, odio trabocca. / Fugge sempre ove il mio bel Sole arriva, / né si parte però la morte viva'.

[7] See Gaspare Visconti, *I canzonieri*, XLVI (capitolo 4); this poem, written in female voice, articulates a description of the effects on the speaker of the personified Jealousy (see, for instance, 73-79: 'Vidi una smorta et increspata vechia / ch'avea cento ochi e ognun lacrime versa, / longa e deforme l'una e l'altra orechia; / la vesta era del pianto suo conspersa, / de incerto stame e de colore incerto, / in un bizzarro cogitar summersa'; 94-96: 'Ella inalzando la sua faccia austera / incominciò: – Germana son d'Amore, / e d'ogni suo subiecto consigliera').

of courtly poets, where similar patterns normally run for a limited portion of the text: a sign that Ariosto, in his extravaganti and youthful verses, was searching for a 'formal' equivalent to express the articulations of the emotion of love.

This propensity is all the more evident in his mature lyric poems, where it is backed by a more skillful technique. As mentioned in the Introduction, when it came to revising his poems and arranging them in **Vr**, Ariosto apparently tried to create a narrative: such an effort was successful only for some portions of the manuscript (see Introduction, 3), while the overall unfolding of the 'inner story' of **Vr**'s poetic speaker is anything but straightforward. This has been described by Bozzetti as a transition from an initial state of restlessness caused by conflicting sentiments, 'nel loro rampollare l'uno dall'altro e nel loro mutevole avvicendarsi e sopraffarsi', through a phase of satisfaction in love, and up to a new 'tumultuoso scontrarsi di certezze e dubbi, sospetti e proteste e riconferme' that eventually gives way to a wiser perspective[8] (in this final part Ariosto also introduced XLIV and XLVI).

We witness, in other words, an ever-changing psychological dynamic involving desire, emotions, and reason, whose interplay Ariosto chooses to display from the very first poem of the collection:

O messaggi del cor, sospiri ardenti,
o lacrime che 'l giorno io celo a pena,
o prieghi sparsi in non feconda arena,
o del mio ingiusto mal giusti lamenti,
o sempre in un voler pensieri intenti,
o desir' che ragion mai non rafrena,
o speranze che Amor drieto si mena,
quando a gran' salti et quando a passi lenti;
será che cessi o che s'allenti mai
vostro lungo travaglio e il mio martire,
o pur fia l'uno et l'altro insieme eterno?
Che fia non so; ma ben chiaro discerno
che mio poco consiglio et troppo ardire

[8] Bozzetti 1985, 92-93.

soli posso incolpar ch'io viva in guai. (*Rime*, I)

Something should be said both of the 'plot' of **Vr** and of its first poem: *progressione del senso* and *punto α*, according to the parametres laid out by Comboni-Zanato 2017. Both levels comply to some extent with the Quattrocento canzonieri. In these, as the two scholars observe, the plot is not always clear-cut: for instance, some canzonieri only display a solid beginning; others adopt a sort of 'circular structure' and end up repeating very similar situations.[9] As for Ariosto's *punto α*, this sonnet – an exercise in the imitation of *Rvf*, CLXI,[10] for which several parallels may be found among Ariosto's contemporaries –[11] may appear unsuited to the proemial position. Indeed, as some scholars have observed,[12] the fact that Ariosto refrains from any repentance and starts off *in medias res* (with the lyric subject still experiencing to the full the alternating vicissitudes of love) sets his sonnet apart from the standard incipitarian poems of Renaissance canzonieri: these, they write, customarily follow *Rvf*, I and, accordingly, display a discrepancy between the past (when love was experienced) and the present, which rejects this experience defining it as an 'errore'. These scholars, however, have considered a limited number of canzonieri as a touchstone for Ariosto. If, however, we consider the whole Quattrocento repertoire, the anomaly will appear less marked. Indeed, from Comboni and Zanato's comprehensive comparison of the fifteenth-century *punti α* it emerges that less

[9] Comboni-Zanato 2017, XXVIII-XXIX; see also Introduction, 3 (especially point 11).
[10] *Rvf*, CLXI 1-8: 'O passi sparsi, o pensier' vaghi et pronti, / o tenace memoria, o fero ardore, / o possente desire, o debil core, / oi occhi miei, occhi non già, ma fonti! / O fronde, honor de le famose fronti, / o sola insegna al gemino valore! / O faticosa vita, o dolce errore, / che mi fate ir cercando piagge et monti!'.
[11] A number of them (which include examples by Giusto de' Conti, Serafino, Tebaldeo, Muzzarelli, Correggio, Sannazaro) are listed by Dilemmi 2000, 485; I will especially highlight Sannazaro, *Sonetti et canzoni*, LXXXI 1-4: 'Interditte speranze e van desio, / pensier fallaci, ingorde e cieche voglie, / lacrime triste, e voi, sospiri e doglie, / date ormai pace al lasso viver mio'. Dilemmi also provides a full analysis of this poem. Another significant poetic exposition of the *status amantis* is Bembo, *Le rime*, 6,1-8: 'Moderati desiri, immenso ardore, / speme, voce, color cangiati spesso, / veder, ove si miri, un volto impresso, / et viver pur del cibo onde si more, / mostrar a duo begli occhi aperto il core, / far de le voglie altrui legge a se stesso, / con la lingua et lo stil lunge e da presso / gir procacciando a la sua donna honore'.
[12] Cabani 2000 [2016], 100-101; Dilemmi 2000, 480-483.

than one-fifth features the word 'errore', and a mere eighth of them clearly places the experience of love in the past; moreover, little attention is paid to Petrarch's *vergogna,* to his *mutatio animi* and to his being a *fabula vulgi*: all signs that these poets 'non considerano, se non blandamente, l'amore una colpa di cui vergognarsi […] dunque in esso perseverano, senza una sincera volontà di cambiamento'.[13] In this light we may say, at least judging from the beginning of **Vr**, that Bozzetti was right in ascribing to Ariosto an 'affermazione di fedeltà'[14] to the poets writing in the Po valley in the previous generation.

The 'simultaneity' we note in sonnet I – in other words, the fact that the poetic subject is speaking at the time of the events (psychological in this case) it describes – in fact applies to most of Ariosto's love lyrics. This confirms a characteristic of the *rime* that had already emerged in the previous chapter, namely, their connection to the present; not in the sense that Ariosto's poetry is 'occasional' – that is, meaningful only in relation to its circumstances of writing – but rather in the sense that he privileges the psychological investigation of ongoing feelings and situations over the dimension of recollection.

My analysis – in the rest of this chapter – of the nuances Ariosto attributes to the love relationship will not be based on the order of **Vr** (on account of its being a problematic, and to some extent artificial order), but will rather identify a number of relevant aspects that are found throughout Ariosto's lyric output (including the extravaganti). I will, nevertheless, be providing references to the poems' arrangement in **Vr** where relevant, especially when this serves to illuminate additional meanings.

Another point that I will be on the whole setting aside is the question whether the poems were actually inspired by Ariosto's relationship with a woman, and in what cases

[13] Comboni-Zanato 2017, XIX-XX.
[14] See Introduction, 3.

that woman should be identified as Alessandra Benucci. As I mentioned in the Introduction, it is difficult to provide a satisfactory answer to this question. Actually, many poems included in **Vr** are entirely justifiable as based on literary tradition, without the need to infer the presence of a real woman behind them; of course, it is still possible that Ariosto did have Alessandra in mind, and that he chose to endow her with a stylized representation in order to conceal her identity, at a stage in which their relationship could not be publicized (this may be the case, for instance, in the poems shown in Chapter I). But although I will generally not tackle this problem, nonetheless, I will make an exception for the supposed dedication to Alessandra of the few poems exclusively included in his 'late' selection: these lyrics display unique (and unifying) stylistic choices, which acquire an even greater significance if one posits that they are inspired by Alessandra. Additionally, this endorses Finazzi's assumption that it was not **Vr**, but rather Ariosto's later attempt at a canzoniere that was dedicated to his life companion.[15]

1. Love encounters: a classical theme

At a thematic level, a striking characteristic of Ariosto's lyrics is the presence, in several of them, of explicit references to sensual love. I am not alluding to that repressed but perceptible erotic tension that belongs to the Petrarchan tradition (epitomized by the underlying myth of Daphne),[16] and even less so to the celebration of Eros pursued in the 'popular' – albeit revisited by cultured authors – genres, such as the *poesia comico-realistica* or Carnival poetry (see Bembo's *Stanze*).[17] Instead, the poetic situations I am

[15] Finazzi 2002-2003, 175, 284; see also Introduction, 1.
[16] See Jonard 1982, 450-453.
[17] See, for instance, Bembo, *Stanze*, XXXIX: 'Come avrian posto al nostro nascimento / necessità d'amor natura e Dio, / se quel soave suo dolce concento, / che piace sì, fosse malvagio e rio? / Se per girar il sole, ir vago il vento, / in su la fiamma, al chin corere il rio, / non si pecca da lor, né voi peccate, / quando 'l piacer, per cui si nasce, amate'.

referring to are actual encounters between lovers, which hark back to the elegiac repertoire.

Of course, Ariosto is not the first to tackle the erotic theme in vernacular lyric poetry. In Medieval literature we shall mention, for example, a memorable passage of Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, which features an encounter between Troiolo and Criseida.[18] Also in the Quattrocento lyric repertoire – which, as Bartolomeo 2012 shows, is most often permeated by a sensual vein – we often find erotic situations: it was down to each individual poet to choose whether to simply allude to them (this is, for instance, the case of Boiardo),[19] or to render them explicit, sometimes under the influence of a classical source – this is the case of Ariosto's capitolo XXI, but also, to mention but one example, of Cosmico's canzone CCCVII, where the poet shamelessly asks his beloved to open the door to him at night, while her husband is sleeping (in this theme he is following an elegy by Tibullus).[20]

We shall now proceed to the analysis of those poems by Ariosto that take the erotic as their domain, namely, XVIII-XXII. These are displayed in **Vr** so as to create a narrative progression, whose exact comprehension, however, is problematic, as some portions of the text of XX, XXI and XXII appear to have been mixed up through the mistake of a copyist: the matter of the collocation of these poems, already tackled by Finazzi, will be briefly discussed, as it may contribute to highlight meanings that would otherwise remain implicit.

[18] Boccaccio, *Filostrato*, III 31-32: 'Lungo sarebbe a raccontar la festa, / ed impossibile a dire il diletto / che 'nsieme preser pervenuti in questa; / ei si spogliaro ed entraron nel letto, / dove la donna nell'ultima vesta / rimasa già, con piacevole detto / gli disse: – Spogliomi io? Le nuove spose / son la notte primiera vergognose. // A cui Troiolo disse: – Anima mia, / io te ne priego, sì ch'io t'abbi in braccio / ignuda sì come il mio cor disia. – / Ed ella allora: – Ve' ch'io me ne spaccio. – / E la camiscia sua gittata via, / nelle sue braccia si ricolse avaccio; / e strignendo l'un l'altro con fervore, / d'amor sentiron l'ultimo valore'.

[19] According to Zanato 2014, 21, 'l'Eros di Boiardo non è mai esplicito, non si spinge a espressioni o situazioni sessualmente evidenti, come spesso accade negli elegiaci latini'.

[20] Quoted in Bartolomeo 2012, 58-59; see also ibid., 55.

1.1.Two mirroring situations

The subjects of capitoli XXI and XXII are a first-person account of, respectively, one fortunate and one unsuccessful night of love. They are among the poems by Ariosto which received most critical praise. The fortune of capitolo XXI, *O più che 'l giorno a me lucida et chiara*, is proved by its rich tradition (it features in thirty-five testimonies).[21] It was written either just before the beginning of the sixteenth century or in its very early years, and immediately earned notoriety (indeed, an imitation of this poem was printed in Liburnio's *Selvette* as early as 1513).[22] In it, the poet expresses his gratitude for all those things that permitted his encounter to take place, listing them in chronological order: the night, the stars which refrained from shining too much, the people in the city overcome by sleep, the door that opened silently (all elements suggesting the clandestine nature of the rendezvous, 'furti d'amor', 4, recognizable as the the elegiac *furtivus amor*); finally, he goes on to recall the intercourse itself and the items within the room that witnessed it, including the bed (31-33) and the lamp ('lucerna', 37) which lighted the scene, thus increasing the overall pleasure of the lovers:

> per te fu duplicato il mio contento,
> né veramente si pò dir perfetto
> uno amoroso gaudio a lume spento. (*Rime*, XXI 40-42)

Finally, in the last part of the capitolo, the speaker laments the approaching of Dawn, who forces him to leave – he actually accuses Aurora of being envious, as she cannot enjoy the same pleasure with her old husband Tithonus:

[21] Finazzi 2002-2003, 229.
[22] Berra 2000, 180-181. See also its employment in the love treatise *Gradenico* by Ludovico Zuccolo, in support of the author's arguments against Platonic love (Favaro 2010, 128). Also Stampa, *Rime*, CIV, and Barignano, *Rime*, CXXXVII, were probably influenced specifically by Ariosto rather than by the generic *topos* of the *beata notte*.

Perché lassasti, ohimé, così per tempo
invida Aurora il tuo Titone antico
et del partir m'accelerasti il tempo?
Ti potessi io, come ti son nimico,
nocer così! Se 'l tuo vecchio t'annoia,
ché non ti cerchi un più giovene amico? (*Rime,* XXI 58-63)

As already pointed out by scholars, in this poem a rich layering of models is detectable. Indeed, its ultimate source, an elegy of Propertius (II 15), had been the subject of a particular revival on the part of humanists, the most relevant works in this sense being Piccolomini's *Historia duobus amantibus*, and two poems in elegiac couplets respectively by Tito Vespasiano Strozzi (*Eroticon libri*, I 6) and by his son Ercole (*Amica tandem potitus exsultat*)[23] – the two latter also feature the final appeal to Aurora, which may be traced back to Ovid, *Amores,* I 13 (27-44). To these Latin examples, many Italian elaborations of the theme of the 'beata notte' could be added.[24] Their authors chose the form of the sonnet: that Ariosto should instead choose the capitolo may reveal his attempt to move closer to the Latin sources. An indication of Ariosto's skill in *imitatio* is the fact that this very capitolo was translated into Latin elegiac distichs, as testified by a little-known manuscript brought to scholarly attention by Finazzi (the translation is anonymous and might have been authored by Calcagnini).[25]

Far less popular in terms of literary reception (and also in terms of critical attention) has been capitolo XXII, *O ne' miei danni più che 'l giorno chiara*, which illustrates an opposite situation, i.e. the hindrance to an amorous encounter caused by an excess of moonlight and a surfeit of stars. This poem deserves to be reconsidered afresh, at the very

[23] Strozzi 1513, I 74*v*-76*r*.
[24] Examples are provided in Malinverni 2000, 503-513: they include Lorenzo de' Medici (*Canzoniere*, CVII), Visconti (*I canzonieri*, LVI-LVII (217-218)), Tebaldeo (*Rime della vulgata*, 189). See also Comboni 2000, 306-307, and Bartolomeo 2012, 55-56 (on the theme in Quattrocento authors), 59 (it provides the text of Cosmico, *Rime*, CLXVI, which also belongs to this tradition). Salza 1914, 71-80 is the first attempt of analysis of the sources of Ariosto's capitolo.
[25] Finazzi 2002-2003, 89, 230.

least on account of its relationships with XXI,[26] whose structure it mirrors so closely that it uses the same rhyme-words in the same position in the two opening lines and resorts to the same rhetorical patterns (in both 'notte' is described by three adjectives, and the third line expresses the overturning of an expectation):

> O più che 'l giorno a me lucida et chiara,
> dolce, gioconda, aventurosa notte,
> quanto men ti sperai, tanto più cara! (*Rime*, XXI 1-3)

> O ne' miei danni più che 'l giorno chiara,
> crudel, maligna et scelerata notte,
> ch'io sperai dolce et hor trovo sì amara! (*Rime*, XXII 1-3)

Another indication of the close relationship between the two capitoli is the presence, in both, of a vehemently indignant appeal to a god; in XXI, as we have seen, this is Aurora, while in XXII it is the too luminous Moon, whose pity the speaker begs, reminding her of her own pleasure when visiting her beloved Endymion (10-12);[27] like the passage that refers to Aurora this, too, is inspired by Ovid's *Amores*, I 13 (where 'Luna' is mentioned at l. 44).

This network of mutual references suggests that the two capitoli should be evaluated as a single lyric experience, or even as an actual diptych. Such a configuration is sometimes found in courtly elegiac literature, the most typical case being the exchanges of epistles in terza rima between lovers, after the model of Ovid's *Heroides*.[28] I believe that one of these 'sets' of poems in particular could have inspired Ariosto: that is, Serafino Aquilano's two capitoli *Della luna* and *Dell'aurora* (which, together with a third, *Del*

[26] Also according to Bozzetti 1985, 94, the two poems show 'connessioni […] collaboranti allo svolgimento dello stesso tema'.
[27] This myth features also in *Fur*., XVI 185,1-4 AB; XVIII C: 'La Luna a quel pregar la nube aperse / (o fosse caso o pur la tanta fede), / bella come fu allor ch'ella s'offerse, / e nuda in braccio a Endimion si diede'.
[28] This genre is analysed in Longhi 1989.

somno, constitute a triptych whose themes recall the elegiac genre).[29] There, too we may find a list of appeals and curses, to the Moon and to Dawn respectively.[30]

But unlike that of Aquilano, Ariosto's approach to the subject is definitely a narrative one: he is able to suggest temporality and create a sense of tension as he approaches, or tries to approach, the object of his desire. Most importantly, he suggests the context where the events take place – the city, with its myriad prying eyes ('tra cento / occhi, fra tanti usci et finestre aperte', 49-50):

> Ma priego et parlo a chi non ode; e il giorno
> s'appressa intanto,[31] et senza frutto, ahi lasso,
> hor mi lievo, hor m'accosto, hor fuggio, hor torno.
> Tutto nel manto ascoso, a capo basso,
> vo per intrar; poi veggio apresso o sento
> chi può vedermi et m'allontano et passo. (*Rime,* XXII 43-48)

While there are elements suggesting that the two poems were written in parallel, it is not as easy to understand their new meaning within **Vr**: this is a point that shall be re-examined in due course.

1.2. Love venues

It should be noted that in XXI and XXII Ariosto makes a point of exploring different possible values of the theme of light/darkness. The night, which obscures the stars and is

[29] These are capitoli 5, 6 and 7 of Aquilano 1967.

[30] I will provide some textual similarities between the two sets of poems: 'Ingrata al Sol, per cui *vai tanto altera*' (*Della luna,* 21) and 'Tu che *di sì gran luce altiera vai*' (*Rime*, XXII 7); 'di Vener bella e soi *amorosi furti*' (*Della luna*, 27) and 'Stelle a' *furti d'amor* soccorrer dotte' (*Rime*, XXI 4); 'Ma a che più dir di te la lingua mïa? / Ché io vedo ogn'hora più tua luce abonda' (*Della luna,* 60-61) and 'Ma priego et parlo a chi non ode; e il giorno / s'appressa intanto' (*Rime,* XXII 43-44); 'Ben mi bastava Amor per *inimico* / senza le insidie tue; ma credo el fai / per non voler al mondo un solo *amico*' (*Dell'Aurora*, 13-15) and 'Ti potessi io, come ti son *nimico*, / nocer così! Se 'l tuo vecchio t'annoia, / ché non ti cerchi un più giovene *amico*?' (*Rime,* XXI 61-63); 'Ma teco, ohimè! più Cephalo non giace, / ché cercaresti rallentare el corso, / qual tanto amasti con passion tenace' (*Dell'aurora*, 70-72) and 'quando al tuo pastorel nuda scendesti, / Luna, io non so s'havevi tanti rai' (*Rime*, XXII 8-9). Capitolo *Della luna* was analysed, in an overview on the anti-lunar theme (for the rest especially considering late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century poems) in Gigliucci 2001.

[31] For this syntagm, see Ovid, *Amores*, I 11,15: 'dum loquor hora fugit' (also echoed by Ariosto in *Rime*, XXIX: see Chapter I, 5.1).

therefore seen as an ally of the poet in capitolo XXI ('minuisti il lume', 5; this darkness creates a rhetorical contrast with the metaphorical 'clarity of night' at l. 1), is filled with light in capitolo XXII and becomes, therefore, the target of the poet's curse:

> Sperai ch'uscir da le cimerie grotte
> tenebrosa devessi et veggio c'hai
> quante lampade ha il ciel teco condotte. (*Rime*, XXII 4-6)

Ariosto refers to the moon and the stars through the metaphorical word 'lampade', normally used for an artificial source of light,[32] thus reminding the reader of the 'lucerna' of capitolo XXI. Through this mirroring, and through the opposition between different values of light, he is contrasting a public context with the intimacy of the site where love takes place: 'o camera che poi così m'affidi!' (*Rime*, XXI 18).

There are two other poems by Ariosto, sonnets XVIII and XIX, which develop the theme of the room as the place where the satisfaction of love is made possible and all the tensions that torment the poetic subject come to an end. Both of them were likely composed at the time of the compilation of **Vr**, and possibly conceived as a narrative background for XXI, as they give a snapshot of the stage immediately preceding the embrace. What makes them remarkable is that this clearly non-Petrarchan theme is here worked into a poetic situation that is respectful of Petrarchan conventions in terms of language, style, and imagery. We shall start by looking at the following:

> O sicuro, secreto et fidel porto,
> dove fuor di gran pelago due stelle,
> le più chiare del cielo et le più belle,
> dopo una lunga et cieca via m'han scorto;
> hora io perdono al vento e al mare il torto,
> che m'hanno con gravissime procelle
> fatto sin qui, poiché, se non per quelle,
> io non potea fruir tanto conforto.
> O caro albergo, o cameretta cara

[32] This meaning is already in *Par*., XVII 5: 'santa lampa'.

ch'in queste dolci tenebre mi servi
a goder d'ogni sol notte più chiara:
    scorda hora i torti e i sdegni acri et protervi,
ché tal mercé, cor mio, ti si prepara
che appagarà quanto hai servito et servi. (*Rime*, XVIII)

This sonnet, too, tackles the contrast light/darkness, by resorting to the traditional Petrarchan metaphor of the woman's eyes as guiding lights and, conversely, of the poet himself as blind unless he is in their presence. This motif is intertwined with another leading image of the *Fragmenta*, namely, the safe harbour, an archetypal symbol (with an age-long tradition)[33] of man's final state of inner peace.[34] Ariosto's reference to the 'cameretta' suggests that the Petrarchan poem he is drawing from is *Rvf*, CCXXXIV, *O cameretta che già fosti un porto*, where the diminutive indicates the poet's little room, which (like his 'letticciuol', 5) is no longer able to give him rest (after having long been his privileged refuge, where he could eventually find peace). Only at l. 9 does Ariosto's equation between harbour and room become clear, thus releasing the tension created by this delayed explanation – it should be noted that the feeling of expectation Ariosto is able to elicit in the reader corresponds to the state of mind of the speaker himself ('ti si prepara', 13).

In this poem, however, the Petrarchan metaphor is completely refashioned: the room is here a place of delight, which, after long hesitation on the part of the woman (symbolized through the 'procelle'), is finally ready to welcome the two lovers.[35] At this point, Ariosto introduces a textual connection with capitolo XXI, namely, the oxymoronic mention of sweet darkness and bright night (10-11). As noted by Cabani, who regards

[33] On the nautical metaphor in poetry a fundamental reference is (despite it mainly examines the image in its metaliterary value) Curtius 1948 [2013], 128-130.
[34] *Rvf*, XIV 7: 'al dolce porto de la lor salute'; LXXX ('porto' is one of the rhyming words of the sestina); CXXVI 24: 'non poria mai in più riposato porto'; CLXXXIX 14: 'tal ch'incomincio a desperar del porto'; CCXXXIV 1: 'O cameretta che già fosti un porto'; CCLXXII 12: 'veggio fortuna in porto'; CCCIII 7: 'porto de l'amorose mie fatiche'; CCCXXXII 70: 'porto de le miserie et fin del pianto'.
[35] I shall note that another 'cameretta' as setting of erotic encounters is in *Decameron*, IX 6.

this sonnet as actually a parody of the Petrarchan code (achieved by means of a 'spiazzamento contestuale'),[36] the theme of the room also appears when Ruggiero waits for Alcina 'in una adorna e fresca cameretta' (*Fur.*, VII 22,7 ABC). Here, the hero's anxiety as he waits is remarkably depicted over several octaves, and the arrival of Alcina is accompanied by the metaphors of 'ridenti stelle' (27,2) and of navigation ('Or sino agli occhi ben nuota nel golfo / delle delizie e de le cose belle', 27,5-6). Moreover, Ariosto subtly communicates the privacy afforded by the place, 'Queste cose là dentro eran secrete, / o se pur non secrete, almen taciute' (30,1-2).

Also the ultimate meaning of sonnet XIX is probably a variation on the theme of the 'little room':

> Aventuroso carcere soave,
> dove né per furor né per dispetto,
> ma per amor et per pietà distretto
> la bella et dolce mia nemica m'have,
> li altri prigioni al volger de la chiave
> s'attristano, io m'allegro, ché diletto
> et non martir, vita et non morte aspetto;
> né giudice sever né legge grave,
> ma benigne accoglienze, ma complessi
> licentiosi, ma parole sciolte
> da ogni fren, ma risi, vezzi et giuochi;
> ma dolci baci dolcemente impressi
> ben mille et mille et mille et mille volte,
> et se potran contarsi ancho fien pochi. (*Rime*, XIX)

This poem exemplifies many innovative aspects of Ariosto's lyric poetry, and will therefore be discussed again later. What I wish to focus on now is that the paradoxical image of the delightful prison may hint at the room itself. This meaning is bolstered by the poem's context in **Vr**; indeed, it is placed immediately after XVIII, but it is also linked to it by a common feeling of tension and expectation ('aspetto', 7). Furthermore, a similar rhetorical development underlies the two poems: the two quatrains, composed by words

[36] Cabani 2000 [2016], 113.

and syntagms clearly recalling the *Fragmenta*, and therefore inducing in the reader the impression of a straightforwardly Petrarchan poem, are followed by the unfolding of the actual theme at the tercets.[37] In XIX, in particular, a real stylistic shift occurs, as the tercets (as well as the last line of the quatrains) lose all connections with Petrarch and instead imitate recognizable classical models, i.e. Catullus and Propertius.[38]

Two more elements enhance the sensual feel of this sonnet: the characterization of the woman as endowed with 'pietà' (3), implying her previous coldness ('sdegni acri et protervi', XVIII 12), which in the end turns to sympathy in the face of the poet's endurance; and, finally, the description of the enjoyment of love in first tercet – note that a similar passage can be found in XXI, again with the word 'complessi':

> O complessi iterati, che con tanti
> nodi cingeste i fianchi, il petto, il collo
> che non ne fan più l'edere o li acanti!
> Bocca ove ambrosia libo, né satollo
> mai me ritorno; o dolce lingua, o humore
> per cui l'arso mio cor bagno et rimmollo. (*Rime*, XXI 19-24)

All these points suggest a spatial continuity between the events taking place in the two sonnets and in capitolo XXI, and show Ariosto's concern with the poetic exploration of the private space, displaying what may be called a 'realistic' taste.

1.3. The theme of silent happiness in capitolo XX

Anyone looking at the pages that, in **Vr**, feature the two capitoli and the two sonnets we have considered, would notice at ff. 11*v*-12*v*, between XIX and the beginning of XXI, the last part (ll. 22-46) of another capitolo, *Forza è ch'infine scopra et che si veggia*,

[37] Roncaccia 2012, 154.
[38] Catullus, *Carm*., V 2: 'rumoresque senum severiorum' (and *Rime*, XIX 8); 7-9: 'da mi basia mille, deinde centum / dein mille altera, dein secunda centum, / deinde usque altera mille, deinde centum' (*Rime*, XIX 12-13); Propertius, II 15, 50: 'omnia si dederis oscula pauca dabis' (*Rime*, XIX 14).

numbered XX in Finazzi's edition and XXX in Bozzetti's previous reconstruction, whose subject is the need for the speaker to keep silent on the true cause of his extreme happiness. Further portions of this poem are scattered in later pages of the manuscript. This disorder must be ascribed to a mistake of the copyist, who was likely copying from wrongly ordered quires; the same mistake also caused the displacement of part of the text of XXII. Whether these poems were actually related to each other in the original 'macrotextual' plan is, therefore, difficult to say.[39] After providing a first hypothesis of reconstruction in her edition,[40] Finazzi has recently come to new conclusions regarding this point, arguing that the capitolo recounting an unsuccessful night (XXII) was originally placed immediately after sonnet XIX and was followed by *Forza ch'alfine scopra et che si veggia* (XX) and by the capitolo on the happy love meeting (XXI).[41]

If we accept this, it would be a further confirmation that capitolo XX is closely related to the poems examined so far, and would disprove Bozzetti's hypothesis, which, numbering it as XXX, drew different conclusions on the internal links within **Vr**.

Although this poem was probably not written for the canzoniere (indeed, it came down to us also uncollected in a slightly different version),[42] the fact that it was placed in a section of the manuscript that forms a coherent unit in terms of motifs should encourage an attentive reading.

As I mentioned before, here the poet needs to conceal his joy (of a clearly amorous nature), which, nevertheless, manifest itself powerfully through real physical symptoms:

Forza è ch'al fine scopra et che si veggia
il gaudio mio dianzi a gran pena ascoso,
anchor ch'io sappia che tacer si deggia,
et quanto dirlo altrui sia periglioso:

[39] A table of the contents of **Vr**, page by page, is found in Finazzi 2002-2003, 130.
[40] A table with the provisional reconstruction of **Vr** is ibid., 131; the problem is discussed ibid., 133-136.
[41] I was informed of the results of this new inquiry, which are still waiting to be published, by Finazzi herself.
[42] Finazzi 2002-2003, 226-227.

perché sempre chi ascolta è più proclive
ad invidiar che ad esserne gioioso. (*Rime*, XX 1-6)

This organization of the theme of silence has several antecedents in the courtly repertoire, among which capitolo XXII of Correggio's *Rime extravaganti* (*Vive in me più che mai quel gran disio*) stands out:[43] here, too, the poet is unwilling to reveal the cause of his happiness, to avoid 'ardente invidia maculata e accesa' (9). Compared to Correggio, Ariosto focuses in more detail on the physical manifestation of joy:

Tentano altro camin, poi ch'io li exclusi
da quel che per la bocca, da chi viene
dal petto, par che per più trito s'usi.
Di passar quindi homai tolta ogni spene,
se ne vengon per gli occhi et per la fronte,
dove raro, o non mai, guardia si tiene (*Rime*, XX 28-33)

In the end, he allows these outward signs to finally manifest themselves, but still strives to hide the cause of his happiness:

Sappil chi 'l vuol saper, ch'io son sì pieno,
sì colmo di leticia et di contento
che non lo cape a una gran parte il seno.
Ma la cagion del gran piacer ch'io sento
non vuo' che soni voce o snodi lingua;
et faccia Dio, se mai di ciò mi pento,
che l'una svelta sia, l'altra s'extingua. (*Rime*, XX 40-46)

Rinaldi, who mentions this poem in his overview of the occurrences of the theme of silence in Ariosto's lyrics, ascribes it to the vernacular tradition of the *segni d'amore* which 'out' the speaker as a lover, exposing him to the 'manifesto accorger de le genti' (*Rvf*, XXXV 6).[44] He also notes, however, that this tradition is absorbed by Ariosto quite

[43] This link had been noted by Comboni 2000, 304; Rinaldi 2000, 335. It should be noted that the opening syntagm of the capitolo, 'Forza è', is recurrent in court poetry and finds correspondences in Tebaldeo, Aquilano, Correggio among others (Finazzi 2002-2003, 227).
[44] Rinaldi 2000, 332-335.

freely – since in the most common version of this motif, unlike in Ariosto's case, the lover is unrequited: he concludes that the true highlight of the capitolo is rather the 'forte sottolineatura morale' conferred by the motif of silence (traditionally associated with wisdom).[45]

Rinaldi is right in emphasizing this aspect, which is in fact relevant to Ariosto (as we shall see in Chapter III, 4). I would add that if one were to pinpoint a precise Humanistic source of inspiration, this would have to be one of Erasmus's *Adagia* (*In sinu gaudere*). Here Erasmus resorts to several examples drawn from the classics in order to underline the concept of the 'silent joy', specifically referring to the bosom as the place where the emotion of love is enclosed (see *Rime*, XX 42: 'che non lo cape a una gran parte il seno') – a sealed receptacle from whence no sign of the lover's joy transpires:

> In sinu gaudere est tacitam apud se voluptatem sentire neque quod vulgo faciunt foras proferre gaudii notas. Tibullus: 'Qui sapit, in tacito gaudeat ille sinu'. Propertius item: 'In tacito cohibe gaudia clausa sinu'. Idem: 'Alter in alterius mutual flere sinu'. De amantibus dictum, qui secretas animi curas invicem effundunt, quas aliis caelant tamen. […] Perinde dictum est in sinu, quasi dicas: in pectore tuo, non in labiis aut fronte, quibus partibus vulgus consuevit prodere quid in animi penetralibus occultat. (*Adagia*, 213)

This aside, however, I would suggest that the point of the poem is precisely the 'unsaid': the reason for the 'gaudio', which the poet challenges readers to understand by themselves. The probability that it may be erotic success turns into certainty following a survey of other possible sources.

[45] Ibid., 335; 337.

Two consecutive sonnets by Boiardo, *Amorum libri tres*, I 52 and I 53, are interesting in this respect. In the former, Boiardo limits himself to general claims of the 'alegreza del mio stato' (3), without specifying its cause; it is only in the latter that, reprising the theme and also introducing the motif of the 'segni d'amore',

> La smisurata et incredibil voglia,
> che dentro fu renchiusa nel mio core,
> non potendo capervi, esce de fore,
> e mostra altrui cantando la mia zoglia. (*Amorum libri tres*, I 53,1-4)

also praises his 'Felice bracia' at line 9, thus revealing the erotic nature of his 'ben passato' (14). In turn, this poem is influenced by the ballata recited by Panfilo that concludes the eighth day of the *Decameron*[46] (note that its l. 7 is exactly replicated at l. 3 of Boiardo's poem):

> L'abondante allegrezza ch'è nel core,
> dell'alta gioia e cara
> nella qual m'hai recato,
> non potendo capervi esce di fore,
> e nella faccia chiara
> mostra 'l mio lieto stato; […] (*Decameron*, VIII 4-9)

Panfilo, too, needs to conceal his joy. In the last stanza he alludes to the involvement of 'braccia' (22), although his audience fails to decipher this confused passage: 'quantunque varii varie cose andassero imaginando, niun per ciò alla verità del fatto pervenne'.[47] Through this ballata, which probably was a source for Ariosto (but also for Boiardo and Correggio), it is possible to interpret the ultimate meaning of capitolo XX as a poem on sensual love, thus bearing out Finazzi's hypothesis regarding its collocation in **Vr** – just

[46] Tissoni Benvenuti 2003, 92-93; Zanato 2014, 37.
[47] Boccaccio 1980, 1028.

before capitolo XXI, where the meeting has just taken place and the poet, no longer able to keep silent, finally gives vent to his happiness.

2. Love, *fides* and constancy

After assessing the significance of the theme of sensual love in Ariosto's lyrics, we must now widen the perspective and investigate how the love relationship is treated. Predictably, the elegiac genre plays a crucial role in shaping the amorous situations, some of which may be regarded as truly genre-defining: the poet/lover experiences the driving force of desire, frustration at the woman's sudden coldness, fears of her infidelity, sorrow for her absence (the last situation has been examined in Chapter I). We will shortly see, however, that Ariosto's interpretation of these *topoi* is quite free, as is his refashioning of the 'slavery of love' (*servitium amoris*), the typical attitude of the elegiac lover – and of his forerunners or pioneers, such as Catullus[48] – which is characterized by an inversion of the relationship between power and gender that places the woman in psychological control of the affair.

The key concept underpinning the ideal love relationship in Ariosto's view is the classical concept of faith, or *fides*. This must be understood as a mutual ethical bond between the two lovers, by which both equally ought to abide. The principle of fidelity may qualify as fully Ariostean as it also regulates several plots of the *Furioso*, where it applies not only to love situations, but more in general to social relationships, playing a fundamental role in the chivalric system of values: it was, as Ascoli puts it, a 'normative bond for all interpersonal and institutional relationships, from the erotic to the diplomatic,

[48] On the relationship between Catullus and the Roman elegists, see Miller 2007 and bibliography.

and one that sealed a connection between the inner person and the society and state of which he […] is a part'.[49]

In the following subsections, we shall consider the poems that are most relevant to a discussion of *fides* in Ariosto and which best bring out its peculiarities.

2.1. Metaphorical illustrations of constancy

The centrality of 'fede' in Ariosto's thought is demonstrated by the fact that he returned to this theme at different stages of his career and made it the subject of two capitoli which share a similarly vivid metaphoric repertoire, namely, capitolo XX ed. Fatini and capitolo XXIV respectively. These, and one further poem (capitolo XXIV ed. Fatini), are worth examining before considering the actual role of *fides* in love interaction.

The first (*Quel fervente desio, quel vero ardore*) belongs to the uncollected poems[50] and is traditionally counted among Ariosto's juvenilia for its style. It uses the metaphor of the fortress to signify the constancy of the lover, which rules over his own soul ('ché una fondata rocca, alta e sicura, / mi guarda il regno mio, detta costanzia', 7-8): the faculties aiding it and those challenging it are depicted by means of the components of the fortress itself (for instance, perseverance as the stones; endurance as its impenetrable walls) and the concept of siege respectively. In the end, constancy is said to overcome all possible enemies, 'ché una rocca di fé mai non si atterra' (40). Not only is such military imagery consistent with Ariosto's own inclination towards chivalric themes; and not only does it bear the mark of the elegiac concept of *militia amoris* (particularly known through

[49] Ascoli 1997, 12. On this theme see also Bucchi 2016, 274-277; other references will be provided in due course.
[50] Finazzi 2002-2003, 28.

its Ovidian formulation[51] and deployed by Ariosto himself in one of his Latin epigrams).[52] It could also be understood as belonging to the tradition of the *rocca interiore*, especially popular in Medieval literature and the subject of a monograph by Gallinaro (Gallinaro 1999). The scholar singles out two possible versions of the theme, which had begun taking shape since the time of Petrarch: one is the *arx rationis*, deriving from ancient philosophers (Plato, Cicero, Seneca), which associates the image to the self's firmness in the virtues; the other is the *arx cordis*, where the image signifies one's irrational submission to Love.[53] Although the latter is more popular in love poetry since the Late Antiquity,[54] in this capitolo Ariosto's use of the metaphor reconnects to the *arx rationis*. The fortress should indeed be understood as the rationality of the poet; reason and foresight are the supreme faculties presiding over the hope of success:

> Regge speranza il mastro torrïone
> sotto due guardie; una, fedel, chiamata
> prudenzia, e l'altra, svegliata, ragione. (*Rime*, capitolo XX ed. Fatini, 16-18)

while the enemies are the worries that may arise in a relationship, caused both by the male lover himself ('gelosia, timor', 32) and by the woman, the latter being the traditional iniquities of the elegiac female figure ('odio, disdegno, / disprezzo, crudeltà, lunga dimora', 32-33).

[51] Ovid, *Amores*, I 10 is the poem which most thoroughly develops the metaphor of the lover as a soldier (1-2: 'Militat omnis amans, et habet sua castra Cupido; / Attice, crede mihi, militat omnis amans'), but the concept of *militia amoris* is overall very relevant to the Latin elegy; the subject is explored by Drinkwater 2013.

[52] *Carmina*, XLII. *In Venerem armata Lacedaemone*. In this poem, in turn inspired by some epigrams from the Palatine Anthology, the goddess Venus is presented equipped with Mars's arms and in the process of fighting a mortal (1-2: 'Arma Venus, Martis sunt haec; quid inutile pondus, / mortali bellum si meditare, subis?').

[53] Ibid., 103-104.

[54] It could be declined in several different ways; for instance, in a popular Medieval version of the *arx cordis* (featured, among others, in Dante's *Fiore*), the fortress is the beloved woman herself, who has to be conquered by the male lover (this often assumes a sexual connotation). Ariosto follows this version in his description of Ricciardetto's 'amoroso assalto' (2) on Fiordispina in *Fur*., XXIII 66,6-8 A; XXIII 68 B; XXV 68 C: 'Io senza scale in su la ròcca salto / e lo stendardo piantovi di botto, / e la nimica mia mi caccio sotto'.

The grounding of constancy in reason, rather than in passion and desire alone, is a trait which often appears in Ariosto's lyric output.[55] That it belongs to the Renaissance mindset is confirmed by looking at a similar articulation of the same metaphor in Castiglione's *Cortegiano*: 'Però quanto qualche grazioso aspetto di bella donna lor s'appresenta […] deve in questo principio provedere di presto rimedio, e risvegliar la ragione e di quella armar la ròcca del cor suo';[56] indeed, the dialogue also highlights the importance of fidelity and its relation to the rational faculty, articulating it through the lens of Neoplatonism and prescribing it as one of the fundamental ethical virtues of the courtier (*Cortegiano* I.XVII: 'integrità di fede […] animo invitto').[57] The opposite scenario, that of a blind fidelity in love induced by irrational passion, is far less explored in the *rime*; but a noteworthy exception is another uncollected capitolo, XXIV ed. Fatini, which develops a metaphor antipodal to the 'rocca', that of navigation in a turbulent sea ('Vo navigando un mar d'aspri martìri / in fragil barca, perigliosa e grave', 1-2) towards the woman-harbour ('voi sète il porto del mio navicare, / voi calamita sète e la mia stella', 10-11). Military imagery pertains, in this case, to the representation of the woman rather than of the poet ('e diedi a voi di me la potestate', 24); moreover, the dispossession of rational control is clear from the last line, where the woman is said to hold the speaker's fortress ('tenendo voi la ròcca del mio cuore', 28), with an inversion of the concept of XX ed. Fatini. These elements suggest that the two capitoli may have been conceived together, as another diptych.

Following these attempts, the theme of constancy is newly explored, possibly at a considerable distance of time, by Ariosto in capitolo XXIV (*Qual son, qual sempre fui*,

[55] This point had already been noted by Favaro 2010, 124-125, and connected by him to contemporary love treatises, where the question on the possible coexistence of love and reason is often raised (Favaro especially focuses on an anonymous treatise dedicated to Cesare Gonzaga).
[56] *Cortegiano*, IV.LXII (I am quoting from the third version of the work).
[57] Quoted in Gallinaro 1999, pp. 205-208.

tal esser voglio), which, unlike those just seen, is included in the main tradition. This time the subject is entrusted to a female poetic persona, who claims her absolute faithfulness to her beloved:

> Qual son, qual sempre fui, tal esser voglio,
> alto o basso fortuna che mi rote,
> o siami Amor benigno, o mi usi orgoglio.
> Io son di vera fede imobil cote
> che 'l vento indarno, indarno il flusso alterno
> del pelago d'amor sempre percote;
> né già mai per bonaccia, né per verno,
> di là dove il distin mi fermò prima,
> luoco mutai, né mutarò in eterno. (*Rime*, XXIV 1-9)

Some philological observations should first be made. This capitolo is strongly related to the *Orlando furioso*: indeed, it served as poetic material for an episode introduced only in the 1532 version, namely, the monologue (XLIV, 61-66 C) spoken by Bradamante so that it may be transmitted to Ruggiero, in order to dissolve the latter's doubts on her fidelity induced by the notice of her imminent marriage to Leone.[58] As a matter of fact, throughout the poem fidelity constantly underlies the vicissitudes of Ruggiero and Bradamante. It is no coincidence that scholars have pointed out how she becomes an 'elegiac woman' in the final part of her story, the 'Leone *giunta*', to which this passage belongs:[59] indeed, in this claim of fidelity Ariosto was probably following Ovid's *Heroides*.[60] In addition, several vernacular examples, in turn inspired by Ovid, could be produced as antecedents (or parallel cases) to XXIV, among which I will mention a sonnet by Boiardo (*Amorum libri tres*, I 57,1-2: 'Io sono e sarò sempre quel ch'io fui, / e se altro esser volesse, io non potrei') and one by Tebaldeo (*Rime della vulgata*, 28,1: 'Io son quel

[58] Cabani 2000 [2016], 122-127; Pich 2008. Note that this capitolo at some point underwent a reworking, witnessed by **Mn**, that identifies the poetic speaker as Bradamante (the first line is, in this version: 'Ruggier, quel sempre fui, tal esser voglio'); it is uncertain whether the author of this different version is Ariosto himself. See Finazzi 2002-2003, 239-240.
[59] Ascoli 2003, 104; 111; 115. The narrative shaping of Bradamante is analysed by Ferretti 2008.
[60] This tradition is analysed by Longhi 1989.

che io fui sempre et esser voglio').[61] As has been noted by Federica Pich, Ariosto's innovation in the capitolo is the choice of a female speaker: indeed, in the poetic tradition this kind of pattern was customarily attributed to male lovers.[62] But Ariosto's originality lies also, again as noted by Pich, in his ability to weave a rich net of metaphors into the theme of constancy, either by choosing as vehicle hard materials (marble, ivory)[63] or by resorting to the language of warfare, as the following excerpt shows:

> A voi di me tutto il dominio ho dato;
> so ben che de la mia non fu mai fede
> meglior giurata in alcun nuovo stato. […]
> Quel ch'io v'ho dato ancho difesso tegno,
> per questo voi né d'assoldar persona,
> né de riparo havete a far disegno.
> Nessuno, o che m'assalti, o che mi pona
> insidie, mai mi trovarà sprovista,
> o mai d'havermi vinta havrà corona. (*Rime*, XXIV 16-27)

A parallel for this metaphoric exposition of female perseverance may be found in a passage of the *Cortegiano*: while praising woman's chastity, in contrast to the misogynist arguments of Gasparo Pallavicino and of Frigio, Cesare Gonzaga states 'che molte se ne trovano invittissime, che ai continui stimuli d'amore sono adamantine e salde nella loro infinita constanzia più che i scogli all'onde del mare'.[64] Despite the different context (chastity rather than fidelity), the metaphor is analogous; and it is interesting that this

[61] These were already noted by Comboni 2000, 307; Pich 2008, 264. But see also *Rvf*, CXLV 13-14: 'sarò qual fui, vivrò com'io son visso, / continüando il mio sospir trilustre'.
[62] Pich 2008, 262-263. But see also an excerpt of Visconti, *I canzonieri*, XLVI (cap. 4), where the female speaker displays a similar metaphor to claim having been absolutely faithful: 'Io salda e ferma qual immobile torre / che non se move per soffiar de' venti, / ma la lor forza qual vil cosa abborre, / spreggiava i pianti e 'lor sospiri ardenti' (25-28).
[63] In this point of the text, the speaker also resumes a metaphorical imagery related to the art of sculpture, as she declares that no artist could ever succeed in modifying the image of the beloved one, firmly imprinted with the hardest material in her heart. This reconnects to another line of tradition, that of the picture of the beloved portrayed inside the lover's heart: see Bolzoni 2010, 317-322; moreover, some Quattrocento examples that make specific reference to sculpture are listed by Zanato in Boiardo 2003, 326-327.
[64] *Cortegiano*, III.L.

passage is present in all versions of the dialogue, including the *Lettera al Frisia in difesa delle donne* (ca. 1508), which probably constitutes its first plan.[65]

If we now return to the passage quoted from XXIV, it should be noted that it brings together the different characterizations of *fides* exploited in the two capitoli examined above: the speaker yields power on herself to the beloved-conqueror and offers her vassalage to him (16-18) – thus translating into military language the theme of 'loss of oneself' expressed through the nautical metaphor in capitolo XXIV ed. Fatini – but at the same time she is ready and willing to pursue a defence strategy against assaults from outside through her strong will, exactly like the speaker of the capitolo on the 'rocca'. I think this intertwining of two opposite conceptions is significant, because it does justice to the psychological complexity of the lover and offers a multifaceted picture of fidelity, as characterized by a coexistence of reason and self-abandonment, which will emerge more clearly from the poems that will be analysed next.

2.2. Love and fidelity: the *foedus*

With the exception of the capitoli just presented, in his constant elaboration on the theme of fidelity Ariosto seems more inclined to suggest its possible contradictions than to uncritically celebrate its power. Throughout the *Furioso*, the demonstrations of 'fede' – like any other chivalric tenet – elicit ambiguous responses on the part of the narrator. As showed by Ascoli, the characters that commit themselves to an unconditional application of that precept often end up doing more harm than good, the most exemplary case being that of Zerbino who, from the moment he pledges his word to protect the hag Gabrina, will be defending the epitome of all evils and treacheries.[66] Through the story

[65] See Ghinassi 1967 (the *Lettera* can be read in its Appendix).
[66] See Ascoli 1997; Bucchi 2016, 275. The story is narrated at *Fur.*, XIX AB; XXI C.

of Zerbino, Ariosto calls into question not the importance of fidelity in itself, but its absoluteness, which does not stand up to the test of the real world. We would be hard put to find the same ethical complexity in the *rime* (also on account of the fact they lack a proper narrative development), but nonetheless, as we will shortly see in some poems where an actual interaction between the two lovers is outlined, Ariosto's lyric treatment of fidelity departs to some extent from the traditional views, and is rather characterized by irony and by a more participatory approach on the part of the male speaker.

Among the classical authors, the most important inspiration for this theme seems to come from Catullus. In Catullus's poems we find the same pervasiveness not only of *fides* itself, but also of its concretization as a *foedus* which binds both partners equally: something very different from the spiritualized, one-sided love that will prevail in the vernacular tradition. As we know, Catullus's relationship with Lesbia was characterized by her repeated breaches of this bond, which caused him pain but also prompted his proud claims of integrity despite all her ingratitude:

> Siqua recordanti benefacta priora voluptas
> est homini, cum se cogitat esse pium,
> nec sanctam violasse fidem, nec foedere in ullo
> divum ad fallendos numine abusum homines,
> multa parata manent in longa aetate, Catulle,
> ex hoc ingrato gaudia amore tibi. (Catullus, *Carm.*, 76,1-6)
>
> nulla fides ullo fuit umquam foedere tanta
> quanta in amore tuo ex parte reperta meast. (Ibid., 87,3-4)

Returning to Ariosto, the keyword *fede* appears early on in **Vr**, and on its first occurrence, in sonnet IX (*Madonna sète bella et bella tanto*), it is exalted by the speaker above all values in a way that ostensibly recalls Catullus ('che più mirabil molto è la mia fede', 14). In this case, however, what is esteemed inferior is no moral value, but rather,

physical beauty; indeed, the abrupt introduction of 'fede' in the last line sounds very much like an *aprosdoketon* (not devoid of irony) in an enumeration of female beauties.[67]

The word 'fede' is then returned to in the first line of the poem which immediately follows,[68] ballata X, where the concept is further illustrated:

> Se voi così mirasse alla mia fede
> com'io miro a vostr'occhi e a vostre chiome,
> exceder l'altre la vedreste, come
> vostra bellezza ogni bellezza excede.
> Et come io veggio ben che l'una è degna
> per cui né lunga servitù né dura
> noiosa mai debbia parermi o grave,
> così vedreste voi che vostra cura
> dev'esser che quest'altra si ritegna
> sotto più leve giogo et più soave,
> et con maggior speranza che non have
> d'esser premiata; et se non hora a pieno
> come devriase, al meno
> con un dolce principio di mercede. (*Rime*, X)

The ballata is organized around a rhetorical construct expressing parallelism, which is replicated throughout ('così […] come', etc.), so as to reflect the equality which should characterize the *foedus* in the poet's hopes. The articulation of the poem as a logical argument addressed to the woman (which would run as follows: just as much as he is ready to undergo the *servitium amoris*, reckoning her beauty as being worth the bondage, so she should reckon his own faithfulness as deserving some reward) feels unfamiliar for the reader of Catullus, who instead infuses the theme with the highest possible bitterness, hardly ever succeeding in processing this resentment by rational means. Furthermore, in Ariosto's case the poet is even ready to wait for the fulfillment of the duty she owes to him, of whose nature he is entirely aware ('come devriase', 13).

[67] On this poem, see Chapter III, 1.4.
[68] The role of this keyword as an internal connector between the two poems has been noted by Bozzetti 1985, 94; Bozzetti-Vela 2000, 235. Both poems are also featured in miscellaneous manuscripts (Finazzi 2002-2003, 214-215).

The same attitude of rational persuasion underlies sonnet XXXV:

> Perché simil' le siano et de li artigli
> et del capo et del petto et de le piume,
> se l'acutezza anchor non v'è del lume,
> riconoscer non vuol l'aquila i figli:
> una sol parte che non le somigli
> fa che esser l'altre sue non si presume.
> Magnanima natura, alto costume,
> degno onde exempio un saggio amante pigli,
> ché la sua donna sua creder che sia
> non dee, s'a' suoi piacer', s'a' desir' suoi,
> s'a tutte voglie sue non l'ha conforme!
> Non siate, dunque, in un da me diforme,
> perché mi si confaccia il più di voi:
> ché o nulla, o voi convien tutta esser mia. (*Rime*, XXXV)

In the two quatrains the poet lays out an *exemplum* ('exempio', 8) for the benefit of all lovers, beginning with himself: he exploits the famous legend according to which the eagle, once her eaglets are born, only acknowledges them as her own if they are capable of fixing their eyes on the sun like herself.[69] This legendary ability has led to interpreting the eagle, in moralistic and religious literature, as a symbol of contemplation.[70] It was also often put to poetic use. A remarkable case is that of Serafino Aquilano, who compared himself to the eagle (a comparison backed by the onomastic pun: aquila-Aquilano) because of his discarding of all thoughts that do not regard his beloved; in turn, this allowed him a further comparison, between the lady herself and the sun, by fixing which he is led to the contemplation of God.[71] The use of this motif in Ariosto is entirely

[69] One of the most famous formulations of the story, much inspirational to Medieval bestiaries, is that of Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XII 7,10-11. For other sources illustrating it, see Ledda 2012, 70 endnote 32.

[70] I will only mention the simile comparing Beatrice to an eagle (who transmits her peculiar quality to Dante himself) in *Par*., I 46-48: 'quando Beatrice in sul sinistro fianco / vidi rivolta e riguardar nel sole: / aguglia sì non li s'affisse unquanco'.

[71] Aquilano, *Sonetti*, I: 'L'aquila che col sguardo affisa el sole / tutti i soi figli ancor prova a la spera, / e qual fissar non può, sdegnata e fiera / morto lo tra' del nido e non lo vole. / Simile spesso far mia mente suole / de' soi penser poi che son nati a schiera; / che qual non mira a la mia donna altiera / presto l'occide e mai non si ne duole. / Questo è quel sol ch'ogn'altra vista abaglia, / che se 'l vedesse ognun come el vidi io / dirria ch'al mio nisiun stato se aguaglia; / perché la mente e ciascun penser mio / spesso convien per lei tanto alto saglia / che conoscer mi fa che cosa è Dio'. Another example is Visconti, *I canzonieri*, VII (4),9-

different: he also engages in a comparison with the eagle, but his beloved is not associated to the sun (any possible celebratory intention is thus severed from the theme) but with the eaglet – she thereby risks to be rejected if she does not fully conform to his desires (the sexual connotation being explicit). According to Turchi's 1567 commentary, the sonnet illustrated an *impresa* which Ariosto had adopted, seeing that his beloved's attitude did not satisfy him entirely;[72] be that as it may, the message we are left with is the lover's (self-)recommendation of wisdom ('saggio amante', 8) when pondering the behaviour of his woman and conducting himself accordingly. While the eagle *exemplum* is traditionally an illustration of wisdom, I would suggest that in this case it also promotes equality between lovers ('simil', 1; 'somigli', 5) against the narcissistic propensity of the lady, who seemingly aspires to the manipulative position typical of the elegiac object of desire: indeed, the poet is ready to relinquish the relationship ('nulla', 14) if he himself is not satisfied. The reader will find a similar concept in sonnet 51 (*Aventurosa man, beato ingegno*), where the speaker, in seeing his woman entirely absorbed in meticulously copying the pattern of a dress, wishes – again in the last tercet – that she would rather imitate his own attitude of constancy ('quanto meglio di voi, ch'imitar vuole, / serà se la fede imita, se 'l mio / constante amor, se la mia giusta voglia', 12-14): note that in both poems this take on the theme of 'somiglianza' dramatically sets Ariosto apart from the lyric vernacular tradition, in which it was rather the lover who made an effort to be more like his beloved in order to elevate his soul.

A very similar moral is expressed by the speaking subject also in sonnet XXXIX (*Se con speranza di mercé perduti*), where his *servitium amoris* is identified with the writing of grieving poetry, in keeping with an equivalence well-established in the love elegy.

14: 'Fisare un sol mia vista se assicura, / come l'ucel di Iove che contrasta / con tua splendente luce per natura, / ma il splendor dupplicato / l'ochio formato a debita misura, / onde a due soli il mio veder non basta'.

[72] Ariosto 1730, II 362.

Having so far failed to move his woman to pity, he gives up, hoping to safe himself from the fate of the legendary Greek inventor Perillus:

> Se voi Phalare sète, io mi v'excuso,
> che non voglio esser quel che per udire
> dolce doler fu nel suo toro chiuso. (*Rime,* XXXIX 12-14)

According to the legend, which is recounted in Pliny the Elder, Lucian and Diodorus Siculus, Perillus presented Phalaris, the tyrant of Agrigento, with a newly created torture device, a bronze bull into whose side the condemned would be pushed and beneath which a fire would be kindled, which was further provided with an acoustic apparatus designed to convert screams into the actual lowing of a bull: the tyrant, disgusted by this cruel invention, ordered Perillus himself to test it first. This legend, which features in Dante[73] and in the Humanistic tradition (it is the subject of one of Erasmus's *Adagia*),[74] was also popular in late-Quattrocento poetry, where Perillus became the perfect embodiment of the poet himself, who sings because of the pain caused by the sadistic will of a tyrannical woman.[75] The choice of Ariosto to detach himself from this stereotype makes him all the more original, and further enhances the importance of the speaker's role in dictating the rules of the relationship.

2.3. Woman's inconstancy

While the situation of unrequited love – where the poet reprimands his beloved for not entirely rewarding his fidelity – often features in Ariosto's lyrics, another typically

[73] *Inf.,* XXVII 7-12: 'Come 'l bue cicilian che mugghiò prima / col pianto di colui, e ciò fu dritto, / che l'avea temperato con sua lima, / mugghiava con la voce de l'afflitto, / sì che, con tutto che fosse di rame, / pur el pareva dal dolor trafitto'.
[74] *Adagia,* 986. *Phalaridis imperium*.
[75] Tebaldeo, *Rime estravaganti*, 443,1-8: 'Come del bue sicilïano usciva / un flebil grido de chi dentro vi era, / che non human lamento, ma una vera / voce parea d'un thoro a chi l'udiva, / così il dolente carme che deriva / da me, che in te Amor chiuse aciòch'io pèra, / esce de la tua bocca in tal manera / che mortal harmonia non par, ma diva'; Correggio, *Rime,* 78,1-4: 'Sì dolce è il lamentar, sì dolce è il pianto / ch'e dolci amanti in dolce foco fanno, / che 'l buò che fu di Faleri tiranno / non diè nel foco mai concento tanto'.

elegiac *topos*, namely, the open accusation of betrayal, is very rare. As is well-known, the woman's sexual promiscuity dominates the vicissitudes of the speaking subject in Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius, as well as in the early-modern reworking of the elegy; it is also a *fil rouge*, for instance, in the second book of Boiardo's *Amorum libri tres*. The marginalization of this theme by Ariosto is another fact that contributes to reducing the elegiac manifestations of *pathos*, and conversely enhances the importance, in his vision, of the idea of equality between the two partners. Indeed, in the only poems featuring clear references to treachery, capitolo XXIII and capitolo XXXI, the theme is treated in an original way, which deserves some attention.

The former (*O lieta piaggia, o solitaria valle*) has come down to us in two different authorial versions. The earlier one, of forty-nine lines (XII*bis* ed. Fatini), is now found as extravagante in thirteen miscellanies; the other is a reworking of the former in view of the compilation of **Vr**, Ariosto's main intervention being the addition of fifty-nine lines.[76] Both versions are in keeping with the long-established tradition of the lover who vents his sorrow in solitude amid a *locus amoenus* – a strand deriving from Propertius, I 18, through the fundamental mediation of *Rvf*, XXXV and CXLVIII. From this tradition Ariosto also borrows the *topos* of the lovers' names cut into tree bark, which he also uses in the love idyll of Angelica and Medoro.[77]

[76] Finazzi 2002-2003, 236-237. In Fatini's edition, the two versions have two distinct numbers (XII and XII*bis*).

[77] *Rime*, XXIII 31-33: 'Io son quel che solea, dovunque o dritto / arbor vedeva, o tuffo alcun men duro, / de la mia dea lasciarvi il nome scritto'; *Fur*., XVII 36 AB; XIX C: 'Fra piacer tanti, ovunque un arbor dritto / vedesse ombrare o fonte o rivo puro, / v'avea spillo o coltel subito fitto; / così, se v'era alcun sasso men duro: / et era fuori a mille luoghi scritto, / e così in casa in altritanti il muro, / Angelica e Medoro, in varii modi / legati insieme di diversi nodi'. The classical source is Propertius, I 18,21-22: 'ah quotiens vestras resonant mea verba sub umbras, / scribitur et teneris Cynthia corticibus!' (see also its imitation by T. V. Strozzi, *Erot*., V 4,47-48: 'Illius ut nostro semper versetur in ore / incisum vestris nomen in arboribus'). On the basis of this model (but also of Virgil, *Buc*., V 13-15: 'Immo haec, in viridi nuper quae cortice fagis / carmina descripsi […] experiar') bucolic literature often features the *inscriptio corticis*, i.e. the bark of the tree as the place where the lover carves the name of the beloved one, or messages addressed to her. On this theme, see Danzi 2017, 132-139; Danzi 2018, 206-209.

The 'short' version may more easily be inscribed within the tradition of court literature; in fact, it could be linked to a youthful capitolo by Bembo, 192 (*Fiume, che del mio pianto habondi et cresci*),[78] which is of similar length and displays similar thematic and lexical choices.[79]

Only in this version, and particularly in its final lines, is the cause of the poet's sufferings (i.e. the woman's betrayal) revealed:

> Quella che sì lodar m'odiste, a cui
> tanto creder solea, m'ha rotto fede:
> per lei sola arsi et alsi, ma non fui
> solo, come al servire, alla mercede. (capitolo XII*bis* ed. Fatini, 46-49)

Ariosto deleted this passage when he added the new portion of text; as a result, in the longer version of the capitolo the theme is toned down and any overt mention of betrayal disappears. In its place, the poet introduces a description of the progressive change of attitude of his beloved, who, after a period of happiness, has inexplicably turned cold towards him; in this context, the vocabulary of *fides* and *foedus* is returned to – with a redeployment of the final syntagm of the last line of ballata X, 'principio di mercede' (see above):

> Quella, ohimè, quella, quella, ohimè, da cui
> con tant'alto principio di marcede
> tra i più beati al ciel levato fui,
> che di fervente amor, di pura fede,
> di strettissimo nodo, da non sciorse
> se non per morte già speme mi diede,
> hor non m'ama, né prezza, et odia forse
> et sdegno et duol credo che 'l cor le punga
> che ad essermi cortese unqua si torse. (*Rime*, XXIII 46-54)

[78] Tissoni Benvenuti 1976, 307.
[79] Both poems start with an invocation to the various elements of nature; moreover, we may compare the following syntagms: 'gelate e lucid'onde' (*Le rime*, 192,2) and 'gelid'onde' (XII*bis* ed. Fatini, 9); the rhyme *fronde* : *onde*.

It is evident that Ariosto expanded the capitolo so that it could be linked to other poems of **Vr**, in order to establish what may be seen as a narrative; significantly, the memory of past nights of passion is expressed in a language that recalls capitolo XXI ('Non pur al süavissimo abbracciarse / de l'amorose lotte, e a i dolci furti / le dolce notte a ritornar son scarse', 64-66). But the reworking for the final version brings about further effects. The reader is now presented with a new nuance of suffering, deriving not from unilateral love but rather from the woman's falling *out* of love ('L'esserne privo causa maggior lutti, / poi ch'io n'ho fatto il saggio, che non fora / s'havuti ognhor n'havesse i denti asciutti', 97-99);[80] most importantly, the elimination of the reference to treachery shifts the focus away from the woman and onto the speaker himself and his attitude. This is evident in the last part of the final version, where he no longer addresses the elements of nature, but the woman herself, engaging in a long rebuke that has the effect of emphasizing by contrast his own moral righteousness, and, what is even more interesting, suggesting that he controls her reputation: one word from him and she will be irreparably dishonoured.

> Ogni lingua di voi serà mordace,
> se s'ode mai ch'un sì benigno giogo
> rotto habbia, o sciolto il vostro amor fugace. (*Rime*, XXIII 82-84)

Although he chooses to remain 'secreto' (104), we still understand that it is the speaker, and not the woman, who has the upper hand. Here, more than ever, the difference between the Quattrocento elegiac capitolo and Ariosto's interpretation of it is clearly perceivable; actually, Ariosto refuses to adopt the tones of the *disperata*, very much used in this genre, featuring exaggerated curses to the woman, often culminating with the threat of suicide.[81]

[80] This is, too, a *topos*; see for instance *Asolani*, I.xxiii, where Perottino highlights the ephemerality of the amorous 'allegrezze', concluding that 'tanto ci appare la miseria più grave, quanto la felicità ci è paruta maggiore'.

[81] Some examples are listed by Tissoni Benvenuti 1976, 306. The scholar also underlines the absence of *disperate* in Ariosto's output (ibid., 307). On the characteristics and the tradition of the *disperata* between

In the revision for **Vr**, therefore, Ariosto reduces the pathos of capitolo XXIII and instead aligns the poem with his ideal pursuit of moral equality in the love relationship.

A somewhat similar and even more accomplished elaboration on the theme of infidelity is capitolo XXXI (*Ben è dura et crudel, se non si piega*), which, according to Finazzi, may have been written for the canzoniere.[82] Here, too, the male lover is rebuking his woman – with whom he used to be happy ('Hor chi di noi / eran più d'amor giunti? / Et chi fidarsi / puote mai più ch'io mi facea di voi?', 70-72) – for no longer reciprocating his faithfulness (Ariosto redeploys a metaphor already seen in XXIV, that of the rock, to which he thought he could compare her firmness: 'le speranze mie sparsi ne l'onde / credendomi fondarle in stabil scoglio', 23-24). He next tries to understand the possible reasons for this behaviour: either she has simply changed her mind (19-27), or she was untruthful even as she first made her promise (28-36). While the former scenario is already reproachable, the latter is a betrayal, and as such it is condemned as the opposite of faithfulness ('la fede […] morta trabocca', 32-33). At this point he launches into a moralistic tirade on the absolute value of faithfulness:

> La fede mai esser non dee corrotta,
> o data a un solo o data che odan cento,
> data in palese o data in una grotta.
> Per la vil plebe è fatto il giuramento,
> ma tra li spirti più ellevati sono
> le simplici promesse un sacramento. (*Rime*, XXXI 43-48)

This portion of text appears in almost identical form in a proem of the *Furioso*, thus confirming the exchange of influences between Ariosto's lyrics and narrative, and the

Italy and France, see Scarlatta 2017 (who argues for its substantial difference, also in the perception of the times, from other genres such as the elegy itself).

[82] Finazzi 2002-2003, 259. The poem is actually mature in terms of style, as can be seen from the frequent use of the *enjambement*, a rhetoric device hardly ever adopted in his juvenilia (see, for example, XXXI 5-6: 'Ma se promette largamente et che le / promesse […]').

prominent role of *fides* in both.[83] In the capitolo as well as in the *Furioso*, Ariosto insists on the force of faithfulness beyond any legal endorsement (in other words, on the superiority of the promise over the oath)[84] and on its sacredness, a feature that is probably borrowed from Catullus ('sanctae foedus amicitiae', *Carm.*, CIX 6) and that leads him to predict the gods' vengeance over the unfaithful woman:

> Et non sa anchor di quanto mal radice
> questo gli sia, se ben non va col fallo
> la pena alhor alhor vendicatrice;
> ma lo segue ella con poco intervallo,
> et ogni cor, che qui par sì coperto,
> trasparente è là su più che cristallo. (*Rime*, XXXI 10-15)

Along these lines, he also implicitly resorts to the geography of Dante's *Inferno* to justify his evaluation of her sin as the most grievous ('più si perdona a l'homicidio e al furto / ch'al pergiurarsi e a l'inganar chi crede', 35-36).

In this framework, however, it is the speaker's psychological attitude that makes also this poem outstanding. In Ariosto's opinion, the most compelling reason for his lady to keep faith does not seem to be the sacredness of the promise, but rather, the poet's own merit: 'quel che, oltra l'havermi / promesso voi, mi si devea per merto' (17-18). Thus, the love relationship is likened to a relation of exchange; within this framework any imbalance must be dealt with and remedied by the guilty party, if it wishes to avoid the terrible punishment of divine justice:

> S'a voi per mia cagione o macchiar l'unge
> o vedessi un crin mosso, ohimè, che doglia!
> Solo il pensarvi me da me disgiunge.
> Voi de periglio et me di pena toglia
> un pentir presto, un satisfarmi intiero;

[83] *Fur*., XIX 2 AB; XXI C. As in the case of the textual material shared between capitolo XXIV and the *Furioso*, here, too, it is impossible to exactly determine what was written before; Finazzi supposes that the first formulation of the tirade was in the first *Furioso* (Finazzi 2002-2003, 259).
[84] *Fur*., XIX 2,5-8 AB; XXI C: 'Come dinanzi a tribunali, in frotta / di testimon, di scritti e di postille, / senza giurare o segno altro più espresso, / basti una volta che s'abbia promesso'.

che sia il debito vostro, et quel ch'io voglia,
ch'a sapere habbia altri che voi non chero. (*Rime,* XXXI 79-85)

The reader may be reminded of Boccaccio's novella of Nastagio degli Onesti, the eighth of the fifth day of the *Decameron*: the young lady beloved by Nastagio finally accepts to reciprocate him when she witnesses the awful torment inflicted on women who die without regretting their coldness. But most of all, we feel the echo of the story of Lidia in the *Furioso*[85] (whose indebtness to the story of Nastagio story has already been acknowledged). Lidia, whom Astolfo encounters in the underworld, gives him an account of her vicissitudes and the reason why she – and many others like her – ended up in hell, namely, her ingratitude (*Fur*., XXXI 11-44 AB; XXXIV C). The infernal setting, also reminescent of Dante, reconnects to the threats voiced by the poet in capitolo XXXI; but the Lidia episode is also dominated by a vocabulary that expresses the idea of exchange.[86]

Actually, other poems by Ariosto also reveal his concept of love as a mutual bond, described in terms of an actual contract between the two parties and ultimately regulated by the gods. Its best formulation is in capitolo XLII, to which we shall return later: here the speaker is ready to waive his 'love credit' if this helps his beloved's recovery back, thereby implicitly recognizing in her illness the divine punishment also envisioned in XXXI ('Così quanto di lei creditor sono / del mio lëal server di cotanti anni, / dipenno tutto et volentier le dono', 28-30). It should be noted, however, that in the capitolo that immediately follows it in **Vr**, XLIII (that addressed to Ippolito; see Chapter I) the poet takes on the role of the debtor: indeed, he is bound to his lord and to his woman by a double debt, having abandoned both ('Restomi qui, né, come Amor vorebbe, / posso Madonna satisfar, né a voi / l'obligo scior che la mia fe' vi debbe', 7-9). The topic of the

[85] Residori 2018, 171-172 also proposes a comparison between this episode and the capitolo.
[86] Zatti 1990, 138-139, proposes an interpretation of Lidia as a reversal of the figure of Francesca in Dante's *Inferno*.

reward deserved by the male lover also emerges in sonnet XXXIV (*Occhi miei belli, mentre ch'i' vi miro*). Here the poet describes the 'dolcezza ineffabil' (2) which he feels when he sees his lady (a joy far higher than that afforded by merely thinking of her – which incidentally underscores the concreteness of this love); he next claims that she ought not prevent him from such contemplation as it does not entail any loss for her, and lays out this issue in terms that evoke financial exchange: 'nulla a voi perde, et a me tanto acquista' (14).

But, to return to XXXI, what especially matters is that the envisioning of a magnified divine punishment, the request for concrete satisfaction (whose sexual nature is perceivable), as well as the way the poet passes judgement on the woman, are infused with irony and archness: again, an attitude at the furthest remove from that, say, of Catullus, who was always on the verge of collapsing into desperation when faced with Lesbia's infidelity. This feeling, which emerges from the last lines, retrospectively casts an ambiguous light on the tirade at ll. 43-48: suddenly, the reader feels that it is nothing other than a persuasive argument directed at the woman in order to reach his goal, and that the poet himself is the first not to believe in his claim to the absoluteness of this value. It is not accidental, in this light, that the context of the *Furioso* where these lines are replicated is the illustration of Zerbino's proof of absolute coherence to his ideals – an episode not free of interpretative ambiguity, as mentioned before – which ultimately carries a relativistic message.

This poem, therefore, is perhaps the most accomplished epitome of Ariosto's revision of the balance of power in the relationship that rescues the male lover from his traditional submissive position, and is underlain by a rhetorical strategy that aims at bending his beloved's will not by eliciting pity but rather through compelling rational arguments.

2.4. The love relationship as a mutual exchange: final observations

Thanks to the 'power' entrusted to the poetic persona, the *foedus* acquires, in Ariosto's hands, a new flexibility. With regard to the *Furioso* this has been suggested by both Ascoli and Zatti, who pointed out the tragic or paradoxical outcome of the plots involving an unconditioned observation of *fides*: Isabella and Zerbino, Filandro and, of course, the episode of Orlando's madness. Zatti juxtaposes these cases to that of the 'unscrupulous' Mandricardo, who, after becoming attracted to Rodomonte's beloved Doralice and deciding to steal her from him, offers Marfisa to Rodomonte as compensation, 'se quando una ne perde, una n'acquista' (*Fur*., XXIV 67,8 AB; XXVI 70 C), with a pragmatism that apparently is not condemned by Ariosto-the-narrator.[87]

Both Ascoli and Zatti also point out how this concept tallies with Machiavelli's relativistic perspective, in which the ability to respond to external factors is regarded as the prince's fundamental virtue. As the analysis of these lyrics has shown, with regard to this peculiar attitude, there seems to be a conflation between the narrator of the *Furioso* and the poetic persona of the lyrics.

Furthermore, I would suggest that this was already evident in Ariosto's early poems. See, the above-mentioned capitolo XLVI (which is structured as a weighing up on the part of the poet of the pros and cons of love), and capitolo XXIII ed. Fatini, where, in addition to the 'customary' language of accounting, we also find him hinting at a theme that, as we shall see, became very dear to him, i.e. the soaring height achieved by amorous thought:

> Non è più tempo stare in quel pensiero
> ch'alto mi leva sì che abbrucia l'ale,
> ma poi torna cadendo al luoco vero;
> ma ben tempo è pensar quanto sia 'l male,

[87] Ibid., 98-99.

> quanto il bene, e stimar l'utile e 'l danno,
> render alla fatica il premio uguale. (*Rime*, capitolo XXIII ed. Fatini, 19-24)

Of course, the development of such an idea of relationship is made possible within a wider framework of thought, which considers and reflects on the issue of reciprocity. This theme deserves closer examination. Here, too, a strong connection can be established with the *Furioso*, where it is exploited in all its narrative possibilities (several of which are inherited from Boiardo) and elevated to the level of a structural principle, its types ranging from the betrothal and/or marital bond (Ruggiero and Bradamante, Brandimarte and Fiordiligi), to the 'irregular' relationship (Isabella and Zerbino).

The motif is extraordinarily complex, and it would be hard to summarize all the shapes it takes in Renaissance culture; along this study's predilection for the courtly milieus, I would like to call attention to the mythological figure of Anteros, often featuring in the culture of Ferrara, Mantua and Milan. Anteros, the son of Venus and Mars (according to Cicero), takes on very different identifying traits in his various embodiments in Humanist texts,[88] at times being the destroyer of love (under whose 'sign' the above-mentioned *letteratura antierotica* should be placed), at others the god of celestial love, as opposed to Eros, the symbol of vulgar love. The latter is the Neoplatonic interpretation, which inspired several works composed between the courts of Milan and Mantua (Paride Ceresara deserves to be mentioned), but also Poliziano's *Stanze*.[89]

One further strand sees Anteros as the god of mutual love, taking the Greek prefix 'anti-' as an expression of reciprocity rather than contrast and supporting this position with several classical examples: among the works that espouse this position are

[88] The apparitions of Anteros in early Renaissance literature have been investigated by Dilemmi 2000*bis* (221-243) and Comboni 2000*bis*. Both also provide satisfactory bibliography on this mythological figure (see at least Panofsky 1939, and Merrill 1944).
[89] Comboni 2000*bis*, 11.

Equicola's *Libro de natura de amore*[90] and a learned essay by Calcagnini, entitled *Anteros sive de mutuo amore*. The latter was dedicated to the diplomat Antonio Costabili, who almost certainly took inspiration from it to design the fresco decoration of the Stanza del Tesoro in his own Palazzo Costabili in Ferrara: and indeed the eighteen lunettes of the room – executed by Benvenuto Tisi 'Il Garofalo' by 1512 – illustrate the eighteen poetic couplets which conclude the essay[91] (it should be noted that Ariosto, too, was well acquainted with Antonio, as they shared the role of vice chancellor of Milan).[92]

In his essay – which is in his customary overly erudite style – Calcagnini claims that he wishes to re-establish the correct judgement on Anteros, mistakenly believed by many as the god of lovelessness: instead, he should be interpreted as the 'grown-up' counterpart of Cupid, who heals the damages caused by the latter, ensuring reciprocation and avenging unrequited lovers.[93] Ariosto may have had Anteros in mind when threatening the intervention of generic deities in capitolo XXXI – just as he was thinking to Cupid in his traditional representation as a capricious blind boy in the poem immediately following it in **Vr**, sonnet XXXII. Here, the speaker, in the course of a conventional complaint about his unrequited love, blames the winged god for having hit him alone and not the lady, who would have been a far more desirable prey for him:

> Pensai che ad ambi havesse teso Amore,
> et voi devesse a un laccio coglier meco;
> ma me sol prese e lasciò andar voi sciolta.
> Già non vid'egli molto a quella volta
> che, s'havea voi, la preda era maggiore,
> et ben mostrò ch'era fanciulo et cieco. (*Rime,* XXXII 9-14)

[90] *Libro de natura de amore,* 192r: 'et in vero doi sono li Cupidini: uno, dicto Heros, l'altro, Antheros. <-> La opinione di quelli che credeno Antheros volere denotare "opposito et non correspondente amore" noi la reputamo totalmente falsa, et lo significato suo essere "mutuo, equale et reciproco amore"> dicemo, ché, benché *anti* "contra" denote, denota anchora "equale" […]'.

[91] This link was established by Schwarzenberg 1964; see also Pattanaro 1994; Fioravanti Baraldi 1993, 80-86.

[92] Catalano 1930-1931, I, 439-440, 448-449.

[93] Calcagnini 1554, 438: 'Huic itaque naturae consortio, mutuaeque animorum coniunctioni, veterum superstitio Anterota praefecit: eumque existimavit mutuis vinculis per quasdam vicissitudines ac reciprocationes animos et rerum genios illigare: hominesque parum in amore gratos ulcisci'.

Mutual love is also the subject of a long-standing discussion in Cinquecento love treatises, on the subject of how the lover should succeed in achieving reciprocity, and if such reciprocity is deserved by him at all. Maiko Favaro, who deals with this topic in his study on the Renaissance amorous treatise, explores a wide range of possible answers provided by various authors and justified by them through literary examples (in this context Petrarch is often quoted, but also Ariosto's *Fur*., II 1,1-2 ABC: 'Ingiustissimo Amor, perché sì raro / corrispondenti fai nostri desiri?').[94] A remarkably elaborate case is constituted by the precepts for unrequited lovers included in the *Ragionamento d'Amore* by Verino, which nevertheless adopts a different perspective from that of Ariosto and is rather in line with traditional Petrarchan poetry: Verino's advice starts with the assumption that the lover is in an inferior position, and that at most he can celebrate the woman or elicit her compassion.

Besides the works examined by Favaro, another text should be taken into consideration, namely, Castiglione's *Cortegiano* in its definitive version. In its third book, while fashioning the ideal *donna di palazzo*, the interlocutors also discuss on the reciprocation of love; Giuliano 'il Magnifico', who is leading the discussion, considers the concept of gender parity and accordingly regards it possible that the lady may return the courtier's love on account of their affinity – indeed, she is described as the ideal female equivalent of the courtier himself. Giuliano's argument, however, is developed on an 'abstract' level, in keeping with the Neoplatonic view, and disregards any reference to physical love (a gaze or a smile of hers being enough reward),[95] which is only acceptable

[94] Favaro 2010, 167-172.

[95] *Cortegiano*, III.LVII: 'Colui adunque che sarà da tal donna amato, ragionevolmente devrà contentarsi d'ogni minima demostrazione, ed apprezzar più da lei un sol sguardo con affetto d'amore, che l'essere in tutto signor d'ogni altra; ed io a così fatta donna non saprei aggiunger cosa alcuna, se non che ella fosse amata da così eccellente cortegiano come hanno formato questi signori, e che essa ancor amasse lui'.

in the case of marriage. On this point Giuliano is answered by Bernardo Accolti ('l'Unico Aretino') who, taking a fairly different perspective on the subject – one ostensibly inspired by the courtly/elegiac genre – claims that the lover should always have his due reward for his fidelity, something that in his experience does not happen often since beauty tends to be paired with cruelty.[96] Accolti's disguise as a frustrated elegiac lover is dismantled by Emilia Pia, who insinuates that he, in reality a well-known ladies' man, is pretending to be the opposite in order to conceal 'le grazie, i contenti e i piaceri da voi conseguiti in amore, ed assicurar quelle donne che v'amano […] che non le publichiate'.[97]

This way, Emilia allusively shifts the focus of the discussion from chaste and sublime to sensual (and transgressive) love. This is somewhat difficult to integrate in the economy of the dialogue; predictably so, because of the diffused prevalence in it of the Neoplatonic perspective (certainly not limited to Bembo's final intervention, but a structural element of the dialogue). This, however, is visible only in the final formulation of the *Cortegiano*: if we consider its previous versions, what prevails is a perspective of love as a social and 'earthly' phenomenon, elegiac-Ovidian, as it were (and analogous to that professed by Gismondo in Bembo's *Asolani*), while the theme of spiritual love is far less developed.[98] In particular, it may be noted that in the second version the person called to speak about love is Accolti himself; the audience appears to marry his point of view and display hostility towards the Neoplatonic theses expressed quite tentatively only by Bembo and the Duchess.[99]

[96] Ibid., III.LX: 'Ben è conveniente […] insegnar alle donne lo amare, perché rare volte ho io veduto alcuna che far lo sappia; ché quasi sempre tutte accompagnano la lor bellezza con la crudeltà ed ingratitudine verso quelli che più fidelmente le serveno e che per nobiltà, gentilezza e virtù meritariano premio de' loro amori'.
[97] Ibid., III.LXII.
[98] Its importance progressively increases among the different versions of the dialogue (consequently, also increases the importance of Bembo as a character). On this issue see Ghinassi 1967, 159-160, Romagnoli 2009, I 80-83, Floriani 1976, 179.
[99] Floriani 1976, 179-182. See in particular sections 101-104 of that version, featuring a playful banter between Accolti and Emilia Pia, which partly survives in the final version. The second *Cortegiano* can be read in Ghinassi's edition (Castiglione 1968).

It is clear that Ariosto's views on love, in capitolo XXXI (but in general in the poems seen so far) are closer to the courtly-elegiac perspective. A further confirmation of this aspect is offered by the theme of secrecy. The point is discussed by the interlocutors of the *Cortegiano*, in a way that provokes the irritation of Bembo.[100] In Ariosto, the promise of secrecy is brought up in the last line of XXXI; the theme is also present in the whole text of capitolo XX (the one describing the 'segni d'amore') and also in capitolo XXIII, where the theme of calumny is introduced, although only as an option rejected by the speaker. This concept applies also to poems that adopt a female point of view: we will return to this point in Chapter III.

3. Another path of the love discourse: the 'courtly-Petrarchan' celebration of woman

If it is the so-called *amor cortese* and the elegy that offers Ariosto most of the ideas for his elaboration on the theme of love, in other texts he proves receptive to a more spiritualized vision, which derives from a mingling of literary memories ranging from Petrarch (undoubtedly the most influential) to the Stilnovo and Neoplatonic thought. Although ostensibly the two strands ('earthly' and 'celestial' love) are incompatible, courtly authors managed to find compromise solutions, even within a single work (this was made possible by a less than rigorous interpretation of Neoplatonism): clear examples are the *Asolani* and the aforementioned passages of the *Cortegiano*.

I will now analyse the poems by Ariosto that bear the mark of this undercurrent, which for convenience I will denominate 'courtly-Petrarchan'. The principle on which these texts are elaborated is the celebration of the lady; the fact that she is characterized as an

[100] Bembo interrupts the discussion on love secrecy 'come chi non regga più a sentir parlare di un amore che abbisogna di precetti e accorgimenti e che s'apprende, ovidianamente, come una qualsiasi 'arte'' (Ghinassi 1967, 168); he is not taken seriously by Gaspare Pallavicino, who turns to Camillo Paleotto praying him to continue on the theme (ibid., 172). The theme of *segretezza* is already present in the first edition of the dialogue (Romagnoli 2009, I 82; Ghinassi 1967, 167).

idealized figure, unreachable for the speaker (who is overwhelmed by the contrasting feelings caused by the sight and the thought of her, expressed through frequent antitheses and oxymorons), suggests that in these texts the canonic balance of power typical of lyric poetry is re-established, with the poet being subjected to his beloved:

> Oh, se quanto è l'ardore
> tanto, Madonna, in me fusse l'ardire,
> forse il mal c'ho nel core osarei dire.
> A voi devrei contarlo,
> ma per timore, ohimè, d'un sdegno resto,
> che faccia, s'io ne parlo,
> crescergli il duol sì che l'uccida presto.
> Pure io vi vuo' dir questo:
> che da voi tutto nasce il suo martire,
> et s'el ne more il fate voi morire. (*Rime*, V)

3.1. Possible influences

Although it is on the whole methodologically incorrect to look for specific sources for the poems by Ariosto now under examination (their inspiration should rather be sought in a poetic *koiné*), an exception may be made for the young Bembo, already a leading figure in the Italian vernacular style in the early sixteenth century (see Introduction).

Bembo's influence can be perceived, for example, in a canzone belonging to the uncollected poems, *Dopo mio lungo amor, mia lunga fede* (III ed. Fatini).[101] In particular, a link can be established between it and Bembo's canzone 79 (*Gioia m'abonda al cor tanta et sí pura*), probably written for Maria Savorgnan in 1500-1501: this link is suggested by the metrical likeness (both canzoni are articulated in only three stanzas with the rhyme scheme ABB.AAC/cDD; envoy: YyZZ, one of Bembo's recognized innovations along the lines of his experimentation on Petrarchan patterns)[102] and by the

[101] Finazzi 2002-2003, 113-114.
[102] As claimed by Dionisotti 1974, 109-110, at that time his major efforts were directed to the (later abandoned) genre of the canzone.

similarity between their themes, i.e. the choice of love in spite of the lady's indifference. The connection is further enhanced by the identity of some lexical choices (emphasis mine):

> *Né* mi *pento* d'amar, né pentir posso (*Rime*, canzone III ed. Fatini, 19)
> *Né* fia per tutto ciò che quella voglia […] rallenti il nodo suo (Bembo, *Le rime*, 79,19-22); *di lui mai non mi pento* (Ibid., 26)
>
> quantunque vada la mia carne in *polve* (*Rime*, canzone III ed. Fatini, 20)
> […] poca *polve* et ombra (Bembo, *Le rime*, 79,12)[103]

Another interesting case is sonnet 58*, a poem that was excluded from Ariosto's projected canzoniere: here a metaphor is developed of the woman as the Sun; this enables the poet to term 'blessed' ('Felice') anything that benefits from her contact, from the land where she was born to the people for whom she constitutes a source of life:

> Felice stella, sotto ch'il sol nacque,
> chi di sì ardente fiamma il cor m'accese;
> felice chiostro ove i bei raggi prese
> il primo nido in che nascendo giacque.
> Felice quell'humor che pria li piacque,
> il petto onde l'humor dolce discese:
> felice fè la terra in che 'l piè stese,
> beò con gli occhi il fuoco, l'aere e l'acque.
> Felice patria, che per lui superba
> con l'India e con il ciel di par contende,
> più felice che 'l parto che lo serba.
> Ma beato chi vita da quel prende,
> ove 'l bel lume morte disacerba,
> ch'un molto giova e l'altro poco offende. (*Rime*, 58*)

[103] See *Rvf*, CCXCIV 12: 'Veramente siam noi polvere et ombra'.

Also in this case, a link with Bembo may be established. His canzone 26, written during his sojourn in Urbino, if not during his earlier stay in Ferrara,[104] has an identical beginning ('Felice stella il mio viver segnava', 1) which consists, in turn, in the reversal of *Rvf*, CLXXIV 1: 'Fera stella […]'. Moreover, the two poems display the same joyful conception of love, depicting the poet's first falling in love and also sharing the metaphorical repertoire of light.[105]

The solar metaphor was certainly not new to Petrarchism,[106] insofar as it enabled the speaker to digress into the 'divine' nature of the lady and to engender other metaphors: the poet burnt by passion; his awe in looking at her or, conversely, the impossibility of fixing his gaze on her (see above, the variations based on the myth of the eagle). If we examine the courtly repertoire, some examples can be found comparable to Ariosto, with the metaphor being articulated throughout the entire length of the poems. See, for instance, Boiardo, *Amorum libri tres*, III 17, where the sunset reminds the poet of 'his other' Sun: 'de l'altro Sol che Crudeltà me asconde' (4); this poem, however, is dominated by a grieving mood.

Most importantly, I believe[107] that the solar theme may here be taken as evidence of a poetic exchange with Ercole Strozzi. The first tercet of Ariosto's poem, in particular, displays the same motif – the competition between the lady's homeland and the Orient (where the real sun rises) – as the first tercet of Strozzi's sonnet *Euro gentil, che gli aurei crespi nodi*:

> Potrai ben dir, se torni al tuo soggiorno,
> né restar brami con mille altri preso,

[104] See Bembo 2008, 67-69.
[105] See Bembo, *Le rime*, 26,8: 'preso al primo apparir del vostro lume'; 11: 'si mise, vago, a gir di raggio in raggio'.
[106] In Petrarch, the longest reference to this metaphor is *Rvf*, CCXIX 9-14: 'Così mi sveglio a salutar l'aurora / e 'l sol ch'è seco, et più l'altro ond'io fui / ne' primi anni abagliato, et son anchora. / I' gli ho veduti alcun giorno ambedui / levarsi inseme, e 'n un punto e 'n un'hora / quel far le stelle, et questo sparir lui'.
[107] I articulate this thesis also in Guassardo 2018, 352-353.

come ’l nostro levante al tuo fa scorno. (Strozzi, I 9-11)

Such poetic dialogues, nevertheless, did not prevent Ariosto from developing original solutions. These will be shown in the following sections.

3.2. The woman as Sun and the poet as Icarus

This metaphor woman-Sun also underpins sonnet II, which is a poetic elaboration on the myth of Icarus. According to this classical story,[108] Icarus, son of the craftsman Daedalus, was imprisoned by King Minos together with his father in the Labyrinth of Crete; he tried to escape with wings made of wax and feathers, but flew too close to the sun and fell into the sea. This theme easily lent itself to metaphoric elaborations in love poetry: if the woman is identified with the sun, Icarus’s flight represents the doomed attempt of the poet to obtain her favours.

Del mio pensier, che così veggio audace,
timor freddo come angue il cor m’assale:
di lino et cera egli s’ha fatto l’ale,
disposte a liquefarsi ad ogni face.
Et quelle, del desir fatto seguace,
spiega per l’aria, et temerario sale;
et duolmi ch’a ragion poco ne cale,
che devria ostarli, et sel comporta et tace.
Per gran vaghezza d’un celeste lume
temo non poggi sì ch’arrivi in loco
dove s’incenda et torni senza piume.
Seranno, ohimè, le mie lacrime poco
per soccorrergli poi, quando né fiume
né tutto il mar potrà smorzar quel foco. (*Rime*, II)

Here in particular, Icarus (not mentioned by name, but clearly alluded to through the reference to crafted wings) personifies the poet’s Thought, which attempts to follow

[108] The story is mostly familiar from *Met.*, VIII 183-235; *Ars amatoria*, II 15-98; but is featured also in Virgil, Horace, Seneca. Its most important classical versions are illustrated by Prandi 2004, 103-109.

Desire up through the air to approach the Woman-Sun ('celeste lume'); the poet witnesses the event, deploring the passivity of Reason, who is supposed to take action, and fearing that 'pensier' may get too close and be incinerated. The myth symbolizes the irrationality of love and, at the same time, the ontological discrepancy between the 'divine' lady and the poet, whose approach to his object of desire cannot but be equated with an act of hubris ('audace', l. 1; 'temerario', l. 6).

Ariosto certainly had in mind several Petrarchan occurrences of the myth.[109] But his choice is also consistent with a Renaissance fashion for this story – which is usually paired with the similar story of Phaeton – which is found in treatises on love, such as the *Libro de natura de amore* and the *Asolani* (in Perottino's pessimistic review of the experience of love),[110] as well as in early sixteenth-century poetry.[111] In the latter, Icarus's fall symbolized the lover, ruinously drawn to his woman despite the awareness of her superiority, only to end up burnt by passion. In particular, sonnet II can be linked to Tebaldeo's Sonnet 347.[112] In it the poet explicitly compares his own 'troppo ardir' to that of Icarus and Phaeton, weaving into it the theme of the endless tears (as in the last tercet of Ariosto's poem); eventually he is drawn to the sententious conclusion that 'chi del suo grado esce / convien che alfin in pianto si consume' (13-14). Another possible match is, also by Tebaldeo, sonnet 600: here the poet warns his 'cor mio cieco' (1) about the

[109] The closest Petrarchan reference is *Rvf*, CCXXX (*I' piansi, or canto, ché 'l celeste lume*). From it, Ariosto may have drawn the syntagm 'celeste lume' and the final comparison between his tears and a river; finally, also Petrarch includes a mention to Icarus ('ma scampar non potienmi ale né piume', 8). See also *Rvf*, CXCIV 12-14: 'I' chiedrei a scampar, non arme, anzi ali; / ma perir mi dà 'l ciel per questa luce, / ché da lunge mi struggo e da presso ardo', and the whole text of *Rvf*, CCCVII (*I' pensava assai destro esser su l'ale*).

[110] *Libro de natura de amore* I, i: 'ma volendo più alto che le forze non supportano volare, Icari et miserabili Phaetonti ci retrovamo; nel che nostra imprudentia, non amor si deve accusare'; Bembo, *Asolani* I.xxv: 'o ali che bene in alto ci levate perché, strutta dal sole la vostra cera, noi con gli homeri nudi rimanendo, quasi novelli Icari, cadiamo nel mare'.

[111] Sonnet II, too, probably dates back to before **Vr**. A slightly different version of it has been transmitted to us as extravagante; it is featured in **V4** where, however, it is attributed to Pietro Barignano.

[112] This link has already been established by Prandi 2004, 113-114.

dangers of rising, and again resorts to the *exempla* of Icarus and Phaeton ('Dovria Phetonte pur farte paura / et Icar, che 'l volare intese male', 5-6).

What matters for the moment is that the idea both stories exemplify, the dangers of daring too much (and the impossibility of controlling desire), appears also in other poems by Ariosto. One is canzone VI (*Quante fiate io miro*). This is featured, alongside a miscellaneous manuscript, in **Vr** but not in **F**: Ariosto probably excluded it from the most mature stage of his lyric project.[113]

The speaker is aware of the audacity of Desire and of the 'forbidden journey' of Hope in its pursuit:

> non posso far ch'un passo
> voglia andar la speranza
> dietro al desire audace.
> La misera si giace
> et odia et maledice l'arroganza
> di lui, che la via tiene
> molto più là che non se gli conviene. (*Rime*, VI 33-39)

This awareness culminates in the fear of some punishment ('però ch'ancor m'aspetto / de la mia audacia pena', 17-18). Although both metaphorical terms – Icarus and Sun – have disappeared, yet the subject is very similar to sonnet II, as both are predicated on the theme of 'flight'. Likewise, the poetic discourse is similar: in both, the envisioning of an uncertain punishment shapes the tense of the poem as a 'present moment', making it very different from Tebaldeo's sonnets, whose atemporality is determined by their moralistic messages.

The connection between sonnet II and canzone VI is enhanced if one looks at the earlier version of the former, which reads 'sperar' (to be compared with 'speranza' at VI

[113] According to Finazzi 2002-2003, 211, its place in the final canzoniere should have been taken by the definitely better accomplished canzone 50 (on which see Chapter III), which also describes the poet's initial bashfulness because of the superiority of the lady.

34) in place of 'pensier' (1). This fact incidentally shows that, in the sonnet, Hope was originally the ground for Icarus's metaphor.[114] The substitution of 'pensier' was probably prompted by the principle of *variatio*, but it also gives more complexity (and a hint of paradoxicality) to the theme, suggesting that even the rational faculty of thinking loses its role, and aspires to a reconnection with the sensual self.

The simultaneous annihilation of Reason also constitutes a divergence from the poetic tradition of the conflict within the soul (*psychomachia*), where Reason is usually one of the fighters rather than a passive witness: a famous example of this are Dante's lussuriosi 'che la ragion sommettono al talento' (*Inf.*, V 39); but also *Rvf*, CI 12: 'La voglia e la ragion combattuto ànno'. More recent examples are offered by Bembo's sonnet 55 (in which Desire engages in a battle against Reason, with 'speme' supporting the irrational side,[115] together with Thoughts which however are explicitly declared to be false),

> Con la ragion nel suo bel vero involta
> l'ardito mio voler combatte spesso
> *di speme armato*, et muovono con esso
> *falsi pensieri* a larga schiera e folta. (Bembo, *Le rime*, 55,1-4 – emphasis mine)

and, again by Bembo, sonnet 96, included in the first version (the *redazione queriniana*) of the *Asolani*:

> Al foco de' vostr'occhi, qual ésca, ardo,
> a cui l'ingordo mio voler mi mena,
> et se ragion alcun tempo l'affrena,
> Amor poi 'l fa più leve et più gagliardo. (Bembo, *Le rime*, 96,5-8)

[114] Other occurrences of Hope and Desire as closely related terms may be found in *Rime*, IV 6-8: 'et sì in alto poggiar dietro al desire / che non osa seguire / la speme' (see below); XXXIII 3-4: 'Deh, Madonna, l'andar fussi interdetto / dove non va la speme ai disir' miei!'.
[115] See also Bembo, *Le rime*, 57,1-4: 'Speme, che gli occhi nostri veli et fasci, / sfreni et sferzi le voglie et l'ardimento, / cote d'amor, di cure e di tormento / ministra, che quetar mai non ne lasci'.

It is worth focusing on the theme of reason (or lack thereof) as a component of the psychology of the lover. The fact that Ariosto appropriates the widespread *topos* of irrationality[116] should be highlighted: by doing so the attitude of the poetic persona emerges as opposite to that expressed in the 'elegiac' poems analysed in the previous sections. In the latter, reason appears as a fundamental principle (although the term itself does not appear), which effectively directs the speaker's behaviour towards the woman. In the 'Icarian' lyrics, on the other hand, lost Reason is supposed to lead him to the opposite behaviour, consisting in self-restraint and respect for her superiority. It is clear that these two concepts are inspired by different interpretations of the female figure. However, in both cases Reason is given a mundane meaning and is therefore free from any Neoplatonic connotation – according to which it should rather be an instrument for the contemplation of God, as opposed to all types of earthly love, which are only driven by senses.[117]

In Ariosto's poetry, only one poem among those that feature an 'Icarian flight' (which, incidentally, are very close to each other in **Vr** and constitute a 'section' proper, placed at the very opening of the canzoniere) may be clearly related to a Neoplatonic framework, namely madrigal IV:

> Quando vostra beltà, vostro valore,
> Donna, et con gl'occhi et col pensier contemplo,
> mi volgo intorno et non vi trovo exemplo.
> Sento ch'allhor mirabilmente Amore
> mi leva a volo et me di me fa uscire,
> et sì in alto poggiar dietro al desire
> che non osa seguire
> la speme, ché le par che quella sia

[116] Ariosto's dialogic capitolo *Amor che voi* also tackles the same theme: see Introduction.

[117] The difference is evident from a comparison with two famous passages of Neoplatonic inspiration, i.e. the intervention of the hermit in the third book of the *Asolani* (see *Asolani* III.xiv; on the hermit's doctrine, which actually combines Neoplatonic and Aristotelian principles, see Berra 1996, 240-255), and that of Pietro Bembo in the fourth book of the *Cortegiano* (in its final version); the latter speaks in favour of the old age as being the most suitable for love, just because, 'quando il fervor naturale comincia a intiepidirsi, s'accendono della bellezza e verso quella volgono il desiderio guidato da razional elezione' (IV.LIII).

per lei troppo erta et troppo lunga via. (*Rime*, IV)

Here, what rises up is the poet's soul itself, prompted by the contemplative act. And indeed, Hope, which belongs to the sensual self, this time remains earthbound. Ariosto is clearly following an idea ultimately derived from Plato's *Phaedrus*, according to which the lover's contemplation of beauty triggers the heavenly ascent of his soul, towards its mystical union with God.[118]

It is known that Ariosto took an interest in Neoplatonism (see Introduction), to which his friendship with Bembo certainly contributed. As a matter of fact, in his 1564 notes to the *rime* Francesco Sansovino states that in using the word 'contemplo' Ariosto was imitating a sonnet by Bembo (he does not however specify which one).[119] Bembo's only poem that features this word is *Le rime*, 145 (*Caro et sovran de l'età nostra honore*), dedicated to Vittoria Colonna. This shares with Ariosto's madrigal four rhyme-words (*exempio* : *contempio*; *valore* : *amore*). Furthermore, in both poems a distinction is made between a 'physical' and a 'non-physical' kind of sight: 'et con gli occhi et col pensier contemplo' (*Rime*, IV); 'scorgo et contempio' (*Le rime*, 145,7). Bembo's sonnet, however, was certainly composed between 1530 and 1531;[120] as for Ariosto's poem, it is attested both in the extravagante and the main tradition,[121] including **Vr**, which is commonly dated *before* the first edition of Bembo's lyrics. While the precise dating of **Vr** is still uncertain, however, I believe it safer – on the basis also of the very different subjects of the two poems[122] – to suppose either that Bembo could be inspired by Ariosto

[118] On the myth of Icarus in Plato's exegesis, see, Prandi 2004, 111; 126-127, footnote 30. The theme of the flight with a similar meaning is, understandably, well established also in spiritual poems (at least from *Par*., XV 54: 'ch'a l'alto volo ti vesti le piume'). See Bembo, *Le rime*, 177,13-14: 'da levarse / et rivolar a te vesta le piume'; Colonna, *Rime,* S1 93,12-14: 'sì che dei propri affetti ogni alma schifa / voli con l'ali del verace amore / a la beata Tua celeste riva'.
[119] Ariosto 1730, II 363: 'Contempio, a imitazion del Bembo in un luogo de' suoi Sonetti'.
[120] Bembo 2008, 345.
[121] Finazzi 2002-2003, 208.
[122] Bembo's praises Colonna's virtues and especially the quality of her poems in death of her husband.

(who also adopts similar pairings in the *Furioso*)[123] or that the two poems may be independent: in the latter case, both may ultimately draw on the coupling between the 'two sights' which is found in Petrarch ('vedere e contemplare', *Tr. Mor*., I 110), as well as in other texts inspired by Neoplatonism.[124] Alternatively, we may suppose that Sansovino was referring to *Le rime*, 41 (*L'alta Cagion che da principio diede*), a sonnet probably composed by Bembo for Lucrezia Borgia in 1503: though less close to Ariosto's madrigal in terms of word choices, this is definitely more similar to it in its theme. Here, the poet says he only enjoys happiness when he looks at his beloved, to whom he always turns 'come helitropio al sole' (14): the beatitude he feels is similar to that caused by the contemplation of God ('et come è sol beato / a cui per gratia il contemplarla è dato', 6-7).

Despite emerging from this poem, however, this version of the 'flight' image remains at the margins in Ariosto's oeuvre. He instead favoured the version which, besides complying with his own vision (which was not particularly interested in the transcendent), also afforded him more scope for psychological exploration.

We may see this in sonnet II, where the speaking voice seemingly witnesses the event from an external standpoint: in other words, the misbehaviour of the components of the self is paradoxically analysed by the entity that can only exist if those components act in unison – and who is here, therefore, both *agens* and a detached *auctor*. This fashioning of the lyric voice is close to that of the afore-mentioned sonnet 600 by Tebaldeo (in which the lyric voice addresses its own heart), but at the same time, very Ariostean: it resembles the status of the narrator of the *Furioso* – at once the victim of the madness induced by

[123] *Fur*., XXI 34,7 AB; XXIII C: 'Lo mira, lo contempla, e dice spesso'; VI 69,5-6 ABC: 'che a l'uom, guardando e contemplando intorno / bisognerebbe aver occhio divino'. The verb 'contemplare' stands for non-physical sight also in *Fur*., XXI 6,7-8 AB; XXIII C: 'ma sempre, o vegli o dorma, con la mente / contemplando Ruggier come presente'.
[124] See, for example, *Asolani*, III.xx: 'Ma vie maggior diletto ti sarà et più senza fine maraviglioso, se tu da questi cieli che si veggono a quelli che non si veggono passerai, et le vere cose che ivi sono contempierai'.

love and he who is able to focus it rationally and foresee its likely course (*Fur*., XXXII 1,5-8 AB; XXXV C: 'Né di tanta iattura mi querelo, / pur che non cresca, ma stia a questo segno; / ch'io dubito, se più si va scemando, / di venir tal, qual ho descritto Orlando').

3.3. The flight of the poet: cases of metapoetry

As briefly mentioned above, during the Renaissance the story of Icarus was, in its poetic elaborations, often associated with that of Phaeton.[125] The possible symbolic meanings of the two stories go beyond the field of love casuistry, and this point deserves some attention.

The myth of Phaeton should first be briefly outlined. Phaeton, the son of Apollo, dared to drive his father's chariot and lost control of it, only to die by falling into the river Po.[126] As it offered the possibility to connect the city of Ferrara to mythological events, this story was a favourite at the Este court, and is featured prominently in Ferrarese literature at least from the first half of the fifteenth century.[127] Ariosto himself includes it in his genealogical review of the Estensi in *Fur*., III 34 ABC, where he defines Ferrara as 'la bella terra che siede sul fiume, / dove chiamò con lacrimoso plettro / Febo il figliuol ch'avea mal retto il lume' (2-4). Taking this passage of the *Furioso* as a starting point, Looney has suggested another factor in the endurance of that myth, namely, the fact that it could be interpreted politically as an image of the weaknesses of the duchy and of 'the Este family's difficulty in maintaining its precarious position in the shifting political

[125] See, for instance, Tebaldeo, *Rime della vulgata*, 34,9-11: 'Icar non son, che con le finte piume / cerchi volar […] né quel che ardendo ruinò nel fiume'; Correggio, *Rime*, 377,5: 'Ma se Icar perse le incerate penne', 36: e Fetonte el mostrò, che cadde in l'acque'. The two stories are associated already in *Inf*., XVII 106-111: 'Maggior paura non credo che fosse / quando Fetonte abbandonò li freni, / per che 'l ciel, come pare ancor, si cosse; / né quando Icaro misero le reni / sentì spennar per la scaldata cera, / gridando il padre a lui: "Mala via tieni!"' (the simile illustrates Dante's flight on Gerione's back).
[126] The most familiar version of the story is in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1.750-2.339).
[127] Some examples earlier than Ariosto are recalled in Looney 2005, 2-4.

realities of early modernity'.[128] In Ariosto's lyrics there is only one explicit mention of Phaeton, in sonnet XVII, which will be analysed later.

But if one jointly considers the Icarus and Phaeton stories, another value comes to light, which may be termed metapoetic in that it reflects on the role of literature, illustrating the limits inherent to creation and the risks connected to artistic ambition. From classical literature onwards, the Icarus/Phaeton figure is evoked self-referentially by writers who experienced (or felt they were about to experience) failure in their attempts: to push poetry to ultimate perfection, to grasp the metaphysical through human language, to achieve eternal fame.[129] Petrarch also explored this theme in several poems, particularly in *Rvf*, CCCVII-CCCIX,[130] where he confronts the limits of his own 'ingegno', symbolized by wings ('I' pensava assai destro essere su l'ale', *Rvf*, CCCVII 1) and reminds himself that divine grace is needed in order to accomplish the endeavour ('A cader va chi troppo sale, / né si fa ben per huom quel che 'l ciel nega', ibid., 7-8). Here Icarus/Phaeton does not feature openly, but his presence is subtly worked into the text of the poems through allusions.

As regards Ariosto, Ascoli and Looney also ascribe this metapoetic value to the mention of Phaeton at *Fur*., III 34, and indeed the context of the octave is overall rich in allusions to poetic inspiration.[131] In addition to Phaeton, here Ariosto mentions his lover Cycnus ('e Cigno si vestì di bianche piume', 6), who, according to Ovid's version of the myth, mourned Phaeton until he was changed by the gods into a swan,[132] thus becoming another archetypal figure of the poet (particularly of the poetry that mourns the loss of a

[128] Looney 2005, 1-2.
[129] There are many scholarly works dealing with the metapoetic meaning of these myths, usually making reference to single authors or works. Prandi 2004 and Giusti 2013 are overviews on the subject over a wide lapse of time, from classical down to Italian (French and Italian, in Prandi's case) literature; see also Velli 1983 (on Sannazaro).
[130] Giusti 2013, 101-102.
[131] Ascoli 1987, 341, 373; Looney 2005, 1.
[132] *Met.*, II 370-380.

loved one). The link between swan and poet is well established in the *Furioso*; the most notable occurrence of the theme is a passage of the lunar episode already mentioned in Introduction, 5 (*Fur*., XXXII 14-30 AB; XXXV C).[133] In it, two swans safely carry in their beaks a number of chosen nameplates out of the river Lethe and towards the temple of Immortality; their ability to hold them despite their weight makes these birds very different from the surrounding crows and vultures – whose strength is insufficient to carry the nameplates, which they eventually drop back into the water. As St John explains to Astolfo, the weaker birds correspond to the Earth's adulators and sycophants, who are often rewarded more than the true poets (the swans): here Ariosto introduces the theme of court patronage through a dispassionate polemic, a well-known example of *serio ludere*, against the ignorance and avarice of rulers, who should not neglect the poets if they wish to be immortalized.[134]

Ariosto also features Cycnus in the last tercet of his sonnet XI:

> Com'esser può che degnamente io lodi
> vostre bellezze angeliche et divine,
> se mi par che a dir sol del biondo crine
> volga la lingua inettamente et snodi?
> Quelli alti stili et quelli dolci modi
> non basterian che già greche et latine
> scole ensegnaro, a dire il mezzo e il fine

[133] See also *Fur*., XXXVII 13,1-4 C (referred to Ercole, son of Alfonso I and duke of Chartres): 'C'è 'l duca de' Carnuti Ercol, figliuolo / del duca mio, che spiega l'ali come / canoro cigno, e va cantando a volo, / e fino al cielo udir fa il vostro nome'.

[134] I will just quote *Fur*., XXXII 23-24 AB; XXXV C: 'Son, come i cigni, anco i poeti rari, / poeti che non sian del nome indegni; / sì perché il ciel degli uomini preclari / non pate mai che troppa copia regni, / sì per gran colpa dei signori avari / che lascian mendicare i sacri ingegni; / che le virtù premendo, et esaltando / i vizii, caccian le buone arti in bando. // Credi che Dio questi ignoranti ha privi / de lo 'ntelletto, e loro offusca i lumi; / che de la poesia gli ha fatto schivi, / acciò che morte il tutto ne consumi. / Oltre che del sepolcro uscirian vivi, / ancor ch'avesser tutti i rei costumi, / pur che sapesson farsi amica Cirra, più grato odore avrian che nardo o mirra'. This passage acts as a prelude to Ariosto's reflection on literature, whose main ability – as he satirically suggests – is to tell lies (see Introduction, 5). A reading of the whole episode of Astolfo's journey as an allegory of the value of literature is that of Mac Carthy 2009. The symbolism of the (white) swan as opposed to the (black) crow, conveying the difference between sincere courtiers and adulators in a context where lord's capacity of discernment is called into question, is in *Sat*., IV 106: 'e stima il corbo cigno e il cigno corbo' (referred to the dispotic 'Laurino', probably Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino – see Chapter IV, 3.1); for this passage Ariosto was probably inspired by Erasmus, *Adagia*, 2297 (*Tum canent cygni, cum tacebunt graculi*). For other occurrences of the crow as a symbol of slander in the *Rime*, see Chapter III, 4.2-4.3.

d'ogni lor loda a gli aurei crespi nodi;
e 'l mirar quanto sian lucide et quanto
lunghe et ugual' le ricche fila d'oro
materia potria dar d'eterno canto.
Deh, morso havess'io, come Ascreo, l'aloro!
Di queste, se non d'altro, direi tanto
che morrei cigno, ove tacendo io moro. (*Rime*, XI)

The poem's subject is the inadequacy of poetry when it comes to praising his lady's beauty, and takes her blonde hair as an example of this. Notably, the poetic discourse proliferates and becomes all the more technically skilful as the theme of ineffability is reaffirmed, that is, throughout the second quatrain and the first tercet, where the use of the *enjambement* increases and the poet proposes a *variatio* of fixed canonical expressions and adjectives for describing blonde hair, 'aurei crespi nodi', 'ricche fila d'oro', 'lunghe', 'ugual'. As a matter of fact, the poem itself is centred on the question on the possibilities of poetry and of language itself;[135] at the very moment in which the poet-speaker talks about his limits, he is also trying to overcome them by attempting to bring his style to the highest possible degree of refinement. Not incidentally, the figure he fails to imitate is Hesiod ('Ascreo'), a poet Boccaccio had designated as lofty.[136]

Ariosto refers to the legend according to which Hesiod acquired limitless communicative abilities after eating the laurel leaves that the Muses gave him in his dream. Without that special gift, Ariosto says, the poetic act will always be dogged by limits, which are inherent not only in the vernacular, but also in every Greek or Latin poetic form (the two antithetic styles mentioned, 'alti stili' and 'dolci modi', are probably the epic and the lyric). Finally, he refrains from any further utterance ('tacendo'), and in the last image of the poem alludes to himself as a failed Cycnus: incidentally, this

[135] Bozzetti already spoke of a 'umanistica riflessione sulla inadeguatezza del volgare' (Bozzetti-Vela 2000, 236).
[136] *Amorosa visione*, IV 72.

metaphor also allows him to allusively pay homage to his homeland (Cycnus died while singing in the Eridanus, that is the river Po).

Such a display of the metapoetic theme reconnects Ariosto to Petrarch, but it is also infused with a classical taste and is intended to compete with the classics themselves (it is significant that the Hesiod legend is also evoked by him in satira VI, which is addressed to Bembo, once again within the framework of a discussion on humanistic knowledge: it is among the myths he wishes his son Virginio to learn).[137]

To know the chronology of this poem would be, in this case, especially useful, as it would allow us to understand the exact circumstances of its writing and its possible recipients; but we only know that it is included in two manuscript testimonies as well as in the main ones.[138] However, there are some hints that suggest a connection between this sonnet and Ercole Strozzi's poetry. The complexity and elegance of its style, and the use of classical myths, are in fact consistent with the poetic manner of the seven extant sonnets by Strozzi (in a style clearly influenced by his familiarity with Latin). Moreover, the rhyme between 'snodi' and the syntagm 'aurei crespi nodi' occurs identically in *Euro gentil, che gli aurei crespi nodi,*[139] which may be implied also in the composition of Ariosto's 58* (see above, 3.1). While 'aurei crespi nodi' is common to Ariosto and Strozzi, the syntagm that corresponds to it in the next tercet, 'fila d'oro', is a self-quotation:[140] thus, it seems that Ariosto wanted to engage in dialogue with a friend who,

[137] *Sat*., VI 137-138: 'e quel che da le morse fronde / par che poeta in Ascra divenisse'.
[138] Finazzi 2002-2003, 216.
[139] 1-4: 'Euro gentil, che gli aurei crespi nodi / hor quinci hor quindi pel bel volto giri, / guarda non, mentre desioso spiri, / l'ale intrichi nel cor, né mai le snodi'. For a long time, this sonnet had been assigned to Castiglione; Strozzi's authorship was finally assessed by Vagni 2011 in his overview on Strozzi's vernacular poetry.
[140] See *Rime*, VII 1: 'La rete fu di queste fila d'oro' (this poem also has a conspicuous tradition as extravagante, and shares, in turn, other connections with Strozzi – see Guassardo 2018, 354); *Rime*, 54,1: 'Qual volta io penso a quelle fila d'oro', which however, was probably written for the canzoniere (see the next section).

at the time (namely, before his death in 1508), concerned himself with moulding the vernacular so as to achieve in it the same proficiency he had in Latin.[141]

I would suggest that also the allusion to Cycnus may bear out this poetic relationship. To understand this point, we should recall the most famous appearance of Ercole Strozzi in literature: that is, his inclusion among the speakers of Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua*. As a matter of fact, the aim of the other characters of the dialogue is precisely to convert Ercole to the use of the vernacular. In the opening of the second book, Giuliano de' Medici recounts a dream he had: while resting along the bank of the Arno, he saw a flock of swans paying homage to one swan; this was Ercole, 'del Po figliuolo', who had moved first to the Tiber, then to the Arno – the dream clearly alludes to the shift from Latin to the vernacular that Giuliano wishes Ercole to make.[142] Could it be that the metaphorical name of 'cigno', instead of alluding to a generic (Ferrarese) poet, refers to Ercole? In this case, Ariosto's mention of Cycnus in the last line of the sonnet could be read as a precise homage to his friend's poetic talent.

3.4. Metapoetic statements

As a final observation on sonnet XI, it should be noted that, because it includes Ariosto's statement of poetic intention, it could be compared to XIII (*Altri lodan il viso, altri le chiome*), which will be analysed in greater depth in Chapter III, 3.2. What matters here is that in XIII the poet's objective (to leave aside the celebration of her outward appearance in favour of her intellectual qualities) is articulated through classical quotations: see the opening *priamel*, alluding to Horace and Propertius ('Altri lodan il viso, altri le chiome […] Me […]', 1-5),[143] and its closing lines, in which the poet regrets

[141] See Introduction, and Guassardo 2018, 354-355.
[142] Bembo, *Prose*, II.III.
[143] Horace, *Od*., I 7,1: 'Laudabunt alii […]; Propertius, II 3,9: 'nec me tam facies, quamvis sit candida, cepit […]'.

not being able to create with his art a 'viva / statua che dureria più d'una etade' (13-14), once again with a quotation from Horace[144] and a veiled reference to another myth, that of Pygmalion. Despite the self-awareness of insufficiency thereby conveyed, the attitude towards the poet's own activity is far more confident in this sonnet than in the one mentioned before: he is opposing his own ambitious, classicizing style to the majority of love poets who can do nothing but repeat the *topoi* imposed by the trite convention of Petrarchism. We come across the same attitude in the already quoted sonnet XIX (see 1.2), which juxtaposes 'li altri prigion' (l. 5), whom we may take to be Petrarch's more pedestrian imitators, and the poet himself, whose different view of love leads him to deploy a classicizing poetical language – to the extent that the poem closes with an evident loan from Catullus.

4. Between realism and myth

The poems we have just examined offer us the opportunity to embark on another overview, the object of which is to scan the employment of classical myths in Ariosto's lyrics, and especially in those poems on whose stylistic maturity scholars generally agree. Although the presence of myths in itself cannot certainly be regarded as a prerogative of Ariosto's, nevertheless the way he works them into the Petrarchan-based linguistic texture achieves remarkable balance, which stands out from his contemporaries. Moreover, in many cases Ariosto is able to superimpose this highly refined poetic register onto situations that are drawn (or at least such as to lead the reader to suppose that they are drawn) from reality: we will now look into this question, examining these poems and, where possible, resorting to comparisons with other authors.

[144] Horace, *Od*., III 30,1: 'Exegi moumentum aere perennius'.

4.1. The mythology of happy love: some examples

Sonnet XVII is definitely one of the most celebrated of Ariosto's lyrics, and one of those with the most conspicuous tradition (in addition to the main testimonies, it appears in eleven manuscripts).[145] On a stormy day, the poet suddenly witnesses the epiphany of his beloved on the shore of the turbulent river Po; her presence determines a weather change, as the winds and the waters are immediately calmed:

> Chiuso era il sol da un tenebroso velo
> che si stendea fin all'extreme sponde
> de l'orizonte, et murmurar le fronde
> s'udiano, et tuoni andar scorrendo il cielo.
> Di pioggia in dubbio, o tempestoso gelo,
> stav'io per ire oltra le torbide onde
> del fiume altier che 'l gran sepolcro asconde
> del figlio audace del signor di Delo;
> quando apparir su l'altra ripa il lume
> de' bei vostr'occhi vidi, e udi' parole
> che Leandro potean farmi quel giorno.
> Et tutto a un tempo i nuvoli d'intorno
> si dileguaro, et si scoperse il Sole;
> tacquero i venti et tranquillossi il fiume. (*Rime*, XVII)[146]

This is the only poem by Ariosto where the landscape is the predominant subject. The description of nature – which occupies the first quatrain, part of the second, and the last tercet – serves as a sort of frame that encloses the development of the event, and is extremely accurate; at the same time, however, the dimension of myth is projected onto it. First of all, the Po is identified, in accordance with tradition, through the image of Phaeton (son of Apollo, the god of Delos). Moreover, the speaker likens himself to

[145] Finazzi 2002-2003, 222.

[146] The textual material of this sonnet also served Ariosto for an octave of the *Furioso* (which already appeared in the 1516 version) where the beginning of a storm is described – it is impossible, however, to determine which of the two elaborations of the theme came first: 'Stendon le nubi un tenebroso velo / che né sole apparir lascia né stella. / Di sotto il mar, di sopra mugge il cielo, / il vento d'ogn'intorno, e la procella / che di pioggia oscurissima e di gelo / i naviganti miseri flagella: / e la notte più sempre si diffonde / sopra l'irate e formidabil onde' (*Fur*., XVI 142 A; XVIII BC).

Leander – who, according to Ovid,[147] would swim across the Hellespont every night to reach his beloved Hero, a priestess of Aphrodite, who would light a lamp to help him see his way. When the speaker of XVII sees his beloved's eyes (the guiding 'lume') and hears her words, he would appear to be ready to replicate the tragic fate of Leander (who eventually drowned in the sea) but the change of weather prevents this from happening.

According to Rinaldi, the woman is here depicted as a good sorceress, capable of controlling Nature's elements through words.[148] This reading is tenable: indeed the 'parole' are the trigger for the speaker's action and, at the same time, for the weather clearing up. Such female portrayal is also consistent with other representations of sorceresses across Ariosto's oeuvre (see Chapter I, 6.3.3). But in addition to this, I should note that a further classical reference is at play in this situation which has hitherto escaped critics, the last tercet being modelled on the following passage of the proem of Lucretius's *De rerum natura* (my emphasis):

> te, dea, *te fugiunt venti, te nubila caeli*
> adventumque tuum, tibi suavis daedala tellus
> summittit flores, *tibi rident aequora ponti*. […]
> Inde ferae pecudes persultant pabula laeta
> *et rapidos tranant amnis*: ita capta lepore
> te sequitur cupide quo quamque inducer pergis. (Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, I 6-16)

The passage is part of the famous invocation to Venus, the goddess of pleasure and desire who rules over the cosmos: it describes the awakening of spring, when her power is at its height. This excerpt had also been significant for Boiardo, who, in *Amorum libri tres*, I 6, represented his beloved Antonia as a modern Venus: 'Al suo dolce guardare, al dolce riso / l'erba vien verde e colorito il fiore / e il mar se aqueta e il ciel se raserena' (12-

[147] *Her*., XVIII. *Leander Heroni*.
[148] Rinaldi 2000, 315-316.

14).[149] It is therefore clear that Ariosto's beloved is embodied by both Hero *and* Venus: the ultimate meaning of the poem is related to mutual, and also sensual, love. It is no coincidence that in **Vr** this sonnet precedes the set of poems on the amorous encounter (see above). It should be noted that Calcagnini explicitly links, in one of his apologues, the Hero and Leander story to the figure of Anteros, the god of reciprocated love and the subject of his essay mentioned at 2.4. Although the chronology of the apologue cannot be established, it is nonetheless worth mentioning it in relation to this poem, as both may be regarded as evidence of a 'hot topic'.[150] Another quotation of the myth to a similar end is in the *Asolani*: it is used by Gismondo to prove the sweetness of love.[151]

Incidentally, it is interesting to compare this poem with Bembo's sonnet 117, *Fiume, onde armato il mio buon vicin bebbe*, as the latter shares a similar theme and was maybe inspired by the former.[152] Bembo stages a similar situation: the woman is caught in a shower of rain while sailing on the river Brenta; the sky soon repents its mischief, and clears up. Bembo, too, accomplishes the description of nature through the lens of myth, but the classical hints end up looking little more than ornamental[153] and do not contribute to the overall meaning of the poem.

The use of myth works towards an end similar to sonnet XVII in capitolo XLII (*O qual tu sia nel cielo, a chi concesso*). The speaker is worried about his beloved's illness and

[149] For Lucretius's influence on Boiardo, see Zanato 2014, 26-28. See also Boiardo 2003, 89-92.
[150] Calcagnini 1544, 638: 'Post Leandri et Herus infortunium ferunt Sestiacos lucernam illam nocturnae natationis testem Anteroti consecrasse, addito titulo: "Anteroti sacrum. Qui se felicem in amore probaverit, hanc succendito. At qui eam succenderit, ad hanc diem inventus est nemo"' (punctuation mine).
[151] *Asolani*, II.xxv: 'Le narrate dolcezze de gli amanti, o donne, essere vi possono segno et dimostramento delle non narrate, le quali senza dubbio tante sono; et alle volte così nuove et per lo continuo così vive, che egli non è hoggimai da maravigliarsi di Leandro, se egli, per vedere la sua donna pure un poco, largo et periglioso pelago spesse volte a nuoto passava'. As noted by Berra 1996, 197, 'la infelice giovane di Sesto' (i.e. Hero) also features in the first book of the *Asolani* (I.xvii), as an example of love suicide which serves Perottino to argue against love.
[152] Bembo 2008, 288.
[153] The Brenta is identified through the memory of the battle of 302 b.C., which saw the victory of the Paduans against the Spartan king Cleonymus ('quando del gorgo e de la destra riva / fugò lo stuol di Sparta', 2-3); see also 14: 'rendendo a Theti chiaro e puro il giorno'.

prays to God for her recovery. But although he is invoking the 'Padre eterno' (l. 40), the poem is infused with classical reminiscences. Female illness is in fact a widespread motif in poetry with elegiac connotations,[154] and this particular case reminds of an elegy by Propertius, II 28, where the poet also appeals to the gods to save Cynthia from a serious illness, and tries to guess at the reasons why they should punish her so harshly. But while what emerges from the poem is a recognition of Cynthia's guilt (at the very least for not having revered the gods enough),[155] Ariosto openly claims his woman's innocence, except on the count of not having reciprocated his love for so long (this point reconnects to the poems on the *foedus* which were examined earlier):

> Innocente è Madonna, se non d'una
> colpa forse: che l'avida mia voglia
> sempre ha lasciata oltre il dover digiuna. (*Rime,* XLII 22-24)

In the last part of the capitolo (from l. 34) the poet asks God to transfer onto him the punishment inflicted on the woman: he resorts to examples of self-sacrifice drawn from the Roman history, showing an erudite poetic attitude that is indebted to the Latin elegy – but is also inspired by Petrarch's *Triumphus Famae*,[156] a fact that enhances the serious, almost heroic tones of this section. Rather than to these, however, I would like to call attention to the myth that concludes the poem, that of Admetus:

> Odiosa fu la tua contraria sorte,
> ingratissimo Admeto, che, agli casti
> prieghi inclinando, la fedel consorte
> morir per te nel più bel fior lasciasti. (*Rime,* XLII 52-55)

[154] To mention but a few examples, Cornazano, XXXVI; Trissino, *Rime,* 32 (9-11: 'Ma tu, Re de le stelle, eterno padre, / non consentir ch'a torto altrui ne prive / del maggior nostro bene, e del più caro'); Tebaldeo, *Rime della vulgata,* 25; Correggio, *Rime,* 249.
[155] Propertius, II 28,5-6: 'sed non tam ardoris culpast neque crimina caeli / quam totiens sanctos non habuisse deos'.
[156] See Segre's commentary (Ariosto 1954, 206).

According to Valerius Maximus,[157] Admetus, the king of Pherae, learnt that he would recover from his serious illness only if his wife Alcestis agreed to die in his place, upon which Alcestis accepted to undergo this fate. This myth serves Ariosto as an 'anti-exemplum', since letting Alcestis die was proof of ingratitude (the worst sin in a love relationship); Ariosto juxtaposes it, in the lines preceding this quotation, to the positive case of Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus who (again in Valerius's recount)[158] had no hesitation in giving his own life in order to spare that of his wife. In this case too, the use of myths is not merely decorative, but aims to better describe a specific situation of love, that of reciprocated love in marriage.

4.2. Alessandra Benucci as dedicatee?

Ariosto's tendency to express through myth a situation of reciprocity reaches its highest degree of originality in a number of poems belonging only to **F**/**Cp** and not included in **Vr**. Whatever the reason for this – Ariosto may have written them later, or he may have not have wanted them to circulate until late in his life because of the private nature of the feelings they describe –, the female protagonist here may be identified not as a fictional lady but rather as Alessandra Benucci. Her relationship with the poet could not be made public for a long time, possibly on account of her fear of losing the management of the legacy of her late husband Tito Strozzi (she and Ariosto eventually got married between 1526 and 1530).[159] These poems, together with canzone 50 (see Chapter III), constitute the most significant integrations of Ariosto's 'last canzoniere', making the supposition likely that in this final form it was to be dedicated to Alessandra.

[157] Ibid., 207.
[158] Ibid.
[159] The exact date of marriage has been highly debated; an attempt to solve the problem is in Catalano 1930-1931, I, 610-623.

Four of these lyrics, sonnets 52, 53, 54, and 55, allow us to reconnect to the theme of illness. They can be regarded as a mini cycle, as they appear in consecutive positions in manuscript **F1**, and were probably prompted by the same occasion, that is, an illness of Alessandra, which made it necessary for her to cut her hair (the theme is tackled also in the more conventional ballata 57, *Se mai cortese fusti*). This allows the poet to indulge in the description of that feature which, of all female physical attributes, most inspires him, that is hair;[160] and indeed, at a first sight, Ariosto may appear here to be writing strictly 'occasional' poems. What he is actually doing is playing variations on this everyday event so as to refine it into myth.

A common pattern among these sonnets should be pointed out, namely, the effort made – in the last lines of each poem – to link the event to a classical legend, which (at least in 53 and 55) may be classified as aetiological. In the tercets of sonnet 53 (*Son questi i nodi d'or, questi i capelli*), Ariosto first reproaches the incompetent doctor ('Phisico indotto', 9) for not being able to find a cure more respectful of Alessandra's beauty; he then concludes that it must have been Apollo, the god of medicine, to want this, in order to eliminate a dangerous rival of his own hair ('Ma così forse ha il tuo Phebo voluto / acciò la chioma sua, levata questa, / si possa inanzi a tutte l'altre porre', 12-14). In sonnet 54 (*Qual volta io penso a quelle fila d'oro*) the poet once again thunders against the doctor, and seeks revenge on his 'empie mani et stolte' (8); thereafter he turns his barrage of accusations onto Cupid, who should have taken action, as Bacchus did by driving Lycurgus insane and compelling him to chop off one of his feet, as a punishment for having cut down the god's sacred vines.[161] The choice of this legend suggests that Alessandra's hair, too, is dear to the gods, and particularly to the god of Love;

[160] See Chapter III, 2.2.
[161] The version of the legend is narrated by Pseudo-Hyginus, *Fabulae* 132.

interestingly, the attitude of passive acceptance attributed to Cupid ('e tel comporti e taci', 14) is identical to that of 'ragion', guilty of not taking action to prevent Thought's flight, in sonnet II (see above: 'et sel comporta et tace').

Sonnet 52 is arguably the most skilfully crafted among the four and as such is worth quoting in full:

> Qual avorio di Gange, o qual di Paro
> candido marmo, o qual hebano oscuro,
> qual fin argento, qual oro sì puro,
> qual lucid'ambra, o qual cristal sì chiaro,
> qual scultor, qual artefice sì raro
> faranno un vaso alle chiome che furo
> de la mia donna, ove riposte, il duro
> separarsi da lei lor non sia amaro?
> Ché ripensando all'alta fronte, a quelle
> vermiglie guancie, alli occhi, alle divine
> rosate labra, e all'altre parti belle,
> non potrian, se ben fosson come il crine
> de Beronice assunto fra le stelle,
> riconsolarsi et porre al duol mai fine. (*Rime*, 52)

The hair itself, argues Ariosto, must be in despair at being separated from such a beautiful creature, and not even being held in the most precious jar will ease the pain of separation. At the end the poet alludes to the possibility that the hair may be placed in the sky by some god, although this does not sufficiently console the tresses themselves. Ariosto creates a link to the story of the Lock of Berenice, the subject of one of Callimachus's *Aetia*, a Latin version of which was authored by Catullus (poem LXVI). In Catullus's account, the Egyptian queen vowed to cut off a lock of her hair and dedicate it to Aphrodite if her husband safely returned from a military campaign; in the epilogue, the lock was transformed by the goddess into a constellation. In Ariosto's poem, not only is the classical source explicitly mentioned at ll. 12-13, but the author's overall empathy with the hair's perspective is consistent with it: indeed, both Callimachus's and Catullus's

poems speak through the voice of the lock, which on several occasions articulates its unwillingness at being parted from Berenice's head.[162]

The choice of this myth permits Ariosto to reconnect to sonnet 54, in which hair is also described as dear to the gods of love. Furthermore, however, he is able to hint that the poem's underlying event is part of a situation of mutual love. Indeed, it is precisely the theme of fidelity that underpins the story of Berenice: this particularly emerges at the end of Catullus's poem, where the speaker encourages young brides not to give themselves to their husbands unless they have first treated their hair with ointments from ritual onyx jars.[163] The fact that Ariosto also includes a jar in 52 is further evidence of his memory of Catullus (although he employs the motif to a different end); there is probably in this also a hint at the 'marital' nature of the relationship between himself and Alessandra, even before their actual marriage took place.

Finally, we should note the witty poetic expedient of starting sonnet 52 with a proliferation of nouns describing precious materials: this tricks the reader into thinking that he is looking at yet another variation of the *descriptio puellae*, which usually deploys such terms with a metaphorical value: this also enhances the parallelism between the actual description of the woman, in the first tercet, and the 'substitute' for the woman herself, that is, the jar.

Sonnet 55 (*Giorno a me sol più che la notte oscuro*) is also constructed similarly to those mentioned above. The poet cannot stop crying for his beloved's illness, whose effects are accurately described ('d'acerbo et duro / mal è premuta et ogni membro ha stanco, / tanto gli arde la febre il petto e il fianco', 5-7); this is described as taking place during a festive journey, while all other people rejoice ('stan gli altri in festa, in gioia',

[162] Catullus, *Carm.*, LXVI 39-40: 'invita, o regina, tuo de vertice vessi, / invita: adiuro teque tuumque caput'; 75-76: 'non his tam laetor rebus, quam me afore semper, / afore me a dominae vertice discrucior'.
[163] Ibid., 80-83: 'non prius unanimis corpora coniugibus / tradite nudantes reiecta veste papillas / quam iucunda mihi munera libet onyx, / vester onyx, casto colitis quae iura cubili'.

3).[164] At this point, Ariosto calls upon the myth of Prometheus ('mercé di Prometeo malvaggio et duro', 8) to justify the woman's illness: enraged at Prometheus's theft of fire as a gift for mankind, Zeus punished the latter by sending down into the world Pandora, whose jar contained all the evils[165] ('poi fece segno con la destra mano / ai mali che scendessero a 'sto loco', 13-14). For Segre, Prometheus was introduced in this poem only as a symbolic representation of fire: therefore, he argues, Alessandra's illness can be read as the effect of a burn, which would have therefore caused the cutting of her hair.[166] Be this as it may, it should be noted that Ariosto is able to establish a chain of correspondences among the characters involved through the use of the rhyme: Prometheus is 'duro' just as 'duro' is Alessandra's illness; each of the woman's limbs is 'stanco', but the poet himself is also 'stanco' (l. 3). The latter link certainly enhances the feeling of empathy between the two lovers.

Such feeling also emerges from sonnet 56 (*Qui fu dove il bel crin già con sì stretti*), which occupies the thirty-first position in **F1**. This is closely related to canzone 50, which describes the circumstances in which Ariosto fell in love with Alessandra. In this sonnet, the poet addresses (l. 4) the architecture of Florence, where the event took place in 1513, during the feast for St. John the Baptist:[167]

Qui fu dove il bel crin già con sì stretti
nodi ligommi, et dove il mal che poi
m'uccise incominciò; sapestel voi,
marmoree loggie, alti et superbi tetti,
quel dì che donne et cavallieri elletti
haveste, quai non hebbe Peleo a' suoi
conviti, alhor che, scelto in mille eroi,
fu alli himenei che Giove havea suspetti.

[164] As a matter of fact, the second line, 'più del solito agli altri puro et bianco [giorno]', probably alludes to a precise event: the day in question may be Easter, or Candlemas.
[165] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 44-105. Ariosto alludes to this myth also in *Sat*., VII 43-45: 'Non vuo' più che colei che fu del vaso / de l'incauto Epimeteo a fuggir lenta / mi tiri come un bufalo pel naso' (he is making reference to Hope, the last to exit Pandora's jar).
[166] Ariosto 1954, 145-146.
[167] See Chapter III, 2.

Ben vi sovien che de qui andai captivo,
traffisso il cor; ma non sapete forse
come io morissi et poi tornassi in vita,
et che Madonna, tosto che s'accorse
esser l'anima in lei da me fuggita,
la sua mi diede, et c'or con questa vivo. (*Rime*, 56)

Such articulation is rather unusual, as in lyric tradition it was the elements of nature, not those of architecture, that were chosen by poets as their confidants. In other words, we are witnessing a refashioning of the 'solo et pensoso' *topos*, whose effect is now to project the poet's experience not onto a conventional chronotope, but onto a real place (this makes this poem very different, for instance, from those on the love encounter that were discussed at the beginning of this chapter). The poet is apparently visiting Florence sometime after the 'fatal day' and recounts what has changed since then; the 'news' is, significantly, that his one-sided love has turned into a reciprocated one, as illustrated through the image in the final tercet, the mutual exchange between the two souls (a motif popularized by two youthful canzoni by Bembo).[168]

The ultimate meaning of the poem, the happiness of the love relationship with Alessandra, is both filtered through and enhanced by the use of myth: in the second quatrain, he compares the luxury of the feast in which he took part (for which see Chapter III, 2.1) to the marriage banquet of Peleus and Thetis. Ariosto probably was thinking of Catullus's version of the myth. While Catullus also lingers on the splendour of the occasion,[169] what is especially relevant in Ariosto is that the use of this myth leads the reader to establish a connection between it and the poet's own situation. The marriage between a goddess and a mortal could indeed be an effective metaphor to describe a happy

[168] Bembo, *Le rime*, 26-27; the latter is probably a reworking of the former in order to be included in the *Asolani*. See 27,20-21: 'così cangiaro albergo, e da quell'hora / meco 'l cor vostro e 'l mio con voi dimora'. In turn, Bembo drew this theme from Giovanni Aurelio Augurello; see Donnini's commentary (Bembo 2008, 68) for details.

[169] *Carmina*, LXIV 43-46: 'Ipsius at sedes, quacumque opulenta recessit / regia, fulgenti splendent auro atque argento. / Candet ebur soliis, conlucent pocula mensae, / tota domus gaudet regali splendida gaza'.

love relationship in lyric terms – it implied, for example, the traditional recognition of the woman's superiority – and the possibility should not be ruled out that Ariosto wrote this poem when he eventually married Alessandra.

5. The conclusion of **Vr**

In conclusion of this overview on the love theme in Ariosto's lyrics, we shall look at sonnet XLVIII (*Come creder debbo io che tu in ciel oda*), which sums up several characteristics that have been noted so far:

> Come creder debbo io che tu in ciel oda,
> Signor benigno, i miei non caldi prieghi,
> se, gridando la lingua che mi sleghi,
> tu vedi quanto il cor ne'·llacci goda?
> Tu che 'l vero conosci, me ne snoda
> e non mirar ch'ogni mio senso il nieghi;
> ma prima il fa' che, di me carco, pieghi
> Charon il legno alla dannata proda.
> Escusi l'error mio, Signor eterno,
> l'usanza ria, che par che sì mi copra
> gli occhi che 'l ben dal mal poco discerno.
> L'haver pietà d'un cor pentito ancho opra
> è di mortal; sol trarlo da l'inferno
> malgrado suo pòi tu, Signor, di sopra. (*Rime*, XLVIII)

It is probable that this sonnet was written in view of **Vr**. As noted by Gorni, 'poco discerno' at l. 11 seems to engage in a dialogue with 'chiaro discerno' of Sonnet I, 12 (both rhyme with 'eterno'), thus sealing that connection between *punto* ω and *punto* α that often occurs in the canzonieri.[170] The possibility that it was conceived as a final poem is made even more convincing by the dialogue it engages with the final ballata of Bembo's canzoniere (which was already in the Marciano It. IX.143, of 1510-1511),

[170] Gorni 1989, 39.

Signor, quella pietà che ti constrinse (*Le rime*, 138) – a point which I briefly examined in Introduction, 3.[171]

The subject matter of this poem is also exceptional. Although this is the only poem by Ariosto to tackle spiritual arguments, expressed within the boundaries of the Petrarchan poetic convention,[172] and despite the presence of the word 'errore', regularly employed by Petrarch's followers to condemn the past experience of love, this definitely cannot qualify as an actual religious poem. The speaker appeals to God so that he may be freed from the 'lacci', but what emerges is rather the opposite, namely, his actual unwillingness to relinquish this love (and be spared from hell); indeed, his prayer is cold (l. 2), and is refused by his sensual self (l. 6).[173] The syntagm expressing the contrast between God's will and his own, 'malgrado suo', reverses the meaning it is given by Petrarch, in whose lyrics it rather indicated an inner conflict, between the poet's soul, which tended towards God, and his body 'che *mal suo grado* "consente" ai legami con la terra'.[174]

This is not the proper place to discuss Ariosto's religious views (a field that still needs investigation);[175] it is clear, however, that his lyric poetry has to be inscribed within a totally human, down-to-earth perspective. Interestingly, Ariosto is here implicitly separating the domain of poetry from that of prayer, associating the former alone with the truthful expression of sentiments, while prayer, entrusted to the 'lingua', is nothing but an exterior ritual which, precisely on account of its shallowness, may not even reach God.

This peculiar fashioning of the spiritual theme invites comparison with the Quattrocento repertoire analysed in Comboni-Zanato 2017. First of all, we shall note that,

[171] The textual affinities have been pointed out ibid., and in Dilemmi 2000, 484. Dionisotti detected in Bembo's ballata 'una certa facilità spirituale e quasi un modo di contrattare famigliarmente e speditamente con Dio la propria salvezza' (Bembo 1960, 649).
[172] These have been noted by Fedi 1990*bis*, 92-93 footnotes.
[173] On this point, see Fedi 1990*bis*, 92-94; Dilemmi 2000, 484.
[174] Fedi 1990*bis*, 93.
[175] The most specific study on this subject has been Fragnito 1992.

while several fifteenth-century canzonieri conclude with a spiritual poem, others choose different themes.[176] But even if one leaves aside the *punti ω*, we shall observe that the *testi di pentimento religioso* (one of the parameters that describe the canzoniere in Comboni-Zanato 2017) are entirely missing from some authors, e.g. Liburnio or Cosmico.

The almost complete absence of repentance from Ariosto's lyrics, therefore, may be seen as being in line with the late-Quattrocento trend, which, in sonnet XLVIII, he also follows in some lexical choices.[177] By that time, however, Ariosto most probably also took as his reference point the more orthodox (Bembian) Petrarchism: if we take this to be so, we may hypothesize that he wished to propose an alternative formula, suggested by the peculiar use he makes of Petrarch's language and conventions (note that he also includes a reminiscence of Dante's *Inferno* at l. 8). Another similar challenge to the Petrarchan tradition occurs, as I have previously observed, in sonnet XIX (*Aventuroso carcere soave*; see 1.2), where it is especially perceptible in the juxtaposition of classical and Petrarchan textual echoes – see the recourse to Catullus and Propertius; but see also, at l. 4, the use of the syntagm 'bella et dolce mia nemica', which infuses with irony a typically Petrarchan expression.[178]

We may go further in exploring this point by looking at the theme of love's enslavement, which links together XIX and XLVIII. The metaphors of the 'carcere' and of the 'lacci' belong to the same image cluster of 'tying': while this metaphor is in fact

[176] Comboni-Zanato 2017, XXIII-XXIV.
[177] The opening syntagm of the poem can be compared with Tebaldeo, *Rime della vulgata*, 185,1: 'Come creder debbo io che quella fede' and Aquilano, *Strambotti*, 328,1: 'Come creder poss'io che ardi sì forte'; for the final line of the first tercet, see Tebaldeo, *Rime della vulgata*, 35,14: 'che discernere il ben non scia dal male' (the affinities with Tebaldeo are noted by Comboni 2000, 307-308).
[178] Also in the *Furioso*, the two occurrences of the word 'nemica' in the Petrarchan meaning are ironic. See *Fur*., XXIII 66,8 A; XXIII 68,8 B; XXV 68,8 C: 'e la nimica mia mi caccio sotto' (this belongs to the description of a sexual meeting between Ricciardetto and Fiordispina), or the narrator's excuses at XXVIII 3,5-6 AB; XXX C: 'Date la colpa alla nimica mia, / che mi fa star, ch'io non potrei star peggio'.

typical of the western tradition,[179] apparently Ariosto attached special importance to it. Most importantly, he attributes to the concept a positive value, linking it with happiness and enjoyment.[180] This fact was acknowledged by Güntert who, recalling several occurrences of this *topos*, concludes that his poetry lacks all 'ansia inesausta dell'assoluto'[181] and instead celebrates his adhesion to all aspects of earthly life. The same point has also been explored by Roncaccia 2012, who contrasted sonnet XIX with Bembo's sonnet 123 (*Tanto è ch'assenzo et fele et rodo et suggo*): Bembo resumes the Petrarchan psychological intonation, featuring the speaker's repeated attempts to wriggle out of the metaphorical net in which he was caught (this point is emphasized by the use of the rhymewords *fuggo* : *rifuggo*, ll. 5-7).

While the difference with Bembo is evident, a conspectus of Quattrocento literature reveals some similarities also with Ariosto's treatment of the theme of enslavement. Boiardo's *Amorum libri tres*, III 3 (9-11: 'Io non posso fugir, né fugir voglio, / ché tanto libertà prezar non degio / quanto il bel laccio d'or che il cor me anoda'), or I 20 are cases in point:

> Né più lieto di noglia esce e di stento,
> sciolto da' laci, il misero captivo,
> quanto io, di poter privo
> e posto in forza altrui, lieto me sento.
> Quel vago cerchio d'or che me tien vivo
> Et hami l'alma e il core intorno avento,
> me fa tanto contento,
> che de alegreza sù nel cielo arivo. (*Amorum libri tres*, I 20,4-11)

[179] The tradition of this theme is recalled by Gigliucci 2000, 298.
[180] See also *Rime*, 50,139-147: 'Deh, dite come avene / che d'ogni libertà m'havete privo / et menato captivo. / Né più mi dolgo ch'altri si dorria / sciolto da lunga servitute et ria. // Mi dolgo ben che de' soavi ceppi / l'inefabil dolcezza, / e quanto è meglio esser di voi prigione / che d'altri re, non più per tempo seppi'; *Rime*, VII 5-8: 'Io son ferito, io son prigion per loro, / la piaga in mezo 'l core aspra et mortale; / la prigion forte: et pur in tanto male / et chi ferimmi et chi mi prese adoro'.
[181] Güntert 1971, 37.

I will also mention Correggio's sonnet 123, where the speaker explicitly refuses to call his amorous slavery an 'errore' and instead underlines the sweetness of such condition:

> Ma pur se il danno col piacer misuro,
> non posso dir che abbia commesso errore,
> puoi che in sì dolce carcer non si mòre
> e il custode non è feroce o duro:
> anzi sì dolci son le sue catene
> che se per qualche meritar le scioglie,
> restano i sciolti in libertà con pene. (Correggio, *Rime*, 123,5-11)

It should also be noted that this line of tradition was continued later in the Cinquecento: this emerges from the survey made by Gigliucci on the various type of Renaissance oxymorons, where several occurrences for the theme of the *amata prigionia* are found, in works by such authors as Colonna, Della Casa, Stampa, and Tarsia.[182]

But returning to sonnet XLVIII, we shall conclude by noting that here we witness a process of 'dispersion of the self' similar to that which we saw in sonnet II, the poem featuring the 'Icarian' flight; in both works the lyric voice acts as a detached observer, and as one powerless at the fragmentation of his own *animo*, where the irrational component takes over (in XLVIII, the 'cor', l. 4, agrees with the sensual self, 'ogni mio senso', l. 6). This affinity creates a short-circuit between the opening and the end of **Vr**, further confirming that no real development takes place within the soul of the poet-speaker, whose condition of enslaved lover cannot but be recorded in the form of individual snapshots of the present time, escaping nearly all possibilities of recollection or careful reflection.

We may see, now, one of the potential reasons for the 'failure' of **Vr**: it is constituted by autonomous moments, which, although often developed and endowed with internal complexity, are only in a handful of cases truly interconnected by their physical

[182] Gigliucci 2004, 144-154.

juxtaposition. The predisposition shown by Ariosto-the-lyric poet for depicting individual moments (which was influenced by a variety of models) meant that the assemblation of these pieces did not bring to a true internal development: it is this crucial drawback that lies at the core of the radical difference between his canzoniere and the highly accomplished orchestration of the theme of love in the *Furioso*.

6. Final note: Ariosto's 'Catullian' lyric poetry

As this analysis has demonstrated, Ariosto definitely shows no predilection for the *Venere celeste* and appears rather to be inspired by a mundane concept of love, which is given an apt poetic form through recourse to the classics as well as to court poetry.

To conclude, I would like to highlight (and concisely evaluate) the relevance, for Ariosto's Italian poems, of a particular poet, that is, Catullus – an author whose presence can also be felt in the *Furioso*[183] and in Ariosto's Latin lyrics.[184]

A 'Catullian thread', which weaves its way through the *rime*, may in fact be identified. While in sonnet XIX the purpose of the Catullian intertextuality is to enhance the sensual meaning of the poem, elsewhere its role is to offer more general support to Ariosto's idea of reciprocated love.

[183] Catullus was one of Ariosto's favourite authors according to his son Virginio (Barotti 1792, 225); Pigna also notes the Catullian influence on Ariosto's Latin poems (Pigna 1554, 73). Harrington 1923, 100-102 lists some passages of the *Furioso* textually indebted to Catullus: I will mention the comparison between young maidens and roses voiced by Sacripante (*Fur*., I 42 ABC and Catullus, LXII 39-47), or Dardinello's death, for which Ariosto borrows the words employed by Catullus to describe the fading of his love for Lesbia (*Fur*., XVI 153 AB; XVIII C, and Catullus, XI 21-24 – this simile, however, is also present in Virgil and Ovid; see the commentary at Ariosto 2012, 622).

[184] Among Ariosto's Latin poems, IX (*Ad Albertum Pium*) takes inspiration from Catullus's carmen IX; XXII is tame compared with Catullus's carmen VIII; XX (*De catella puellae*) is inspired by Catullus's II and III (on Lesbia's sparrow), and by XII; moreover, XXI (*In Lenam*) can be compared to Catullus's XLII; the last lines of XXXII (*[De Glycere et Lycori]*) adopt the rhetorical structure of Catullus's LXXXV; finally, the epithalamium on Alfonso d'Este's marriage to Lucrezia Borgia (LIII) is modelled after Catullus's LXII. Ariosto could consult the 1502 edition, published in Venice by Manutius. For an overview of Catullus's Humanistic reception, see Gaisser 1993; Gaisser 2007. On the sources of Ariosto's Latin poems see, besides Segre's commentary, Severi 2018.

It is significant that precise borrowings from the *Liber* are found in the poems inspired by Alessandra, where they contribute to enhance the idea of marital love that subtly emerges in them. But it is even more interesting that Catullus's influence should also apply to poems probably *not* featuring Alessandra, namely, those that explore the concept of *foedus* (see above), where Catullus seems indeed to be a constant presence (albeit one not openly acknowledged through quotation). Furthermore, I would like to call attention to the 'narrative plot' of **Vr**: close to the outset, the possibility of woman's reciprocation is announced through a Catullian rewriting, in sonnet XIV (*Quel capriol che, con invidia et sdegno*).[185] The poet is speaking about a deer, the pet of his beloved who, saddened by its death, has granted it 'honesto sepolcro' (8): having discovered that she is capable of pity, the poet is now certain of his own future reward, 'ché, quando s'incomincia a scior la neve, / che appresso il fin sia il verno è chiara fede' (13-14). The poem is a blatant rewriting of two *carmina* by Catullus (II-III) that were extremely influential throughout the Renaissance,[186] with Lesbia's sparrow changed into the 'capriolo' (an animal endowed with a certain late-Gothic appeal). It should be pointed out that these two poems by Catullus were also imitated by Ariosto in Latin, in his poem XX (*De catella puellae*), this time on his beloved's dog.[187]

Thus, it appears that, despite the undeniable importance of Horace, Propertius and Ovid, Catullus is the principal poetic touchstone for Ariosto's elaboration of the love theme, and provides him with the means to conflate the elegiac situation of *furtivus amor* with one closer to the marital status, characterized by equality between the two lovers. Prompted by these literary memories, Ariosto ultimately achieves a balance that even

[185] This is featured only in the main tradition.
[186] See Gaisser 2007.
[187] See Ariosto 1954, 52-55.

allows scope for irony – something that crucially links the elegiac lover of these poems to the narrator of the *Furioso*.

III. The Portrayal of Women

0. Preamble

In the preceding chapter, my discussion of Ariosto's treatment of the love relationship necessarily touched upon the fashioning of the beloved woman. I have tried to show that the poet's own elaboration of this theme is very original, and how it puts forward a balanced relationship between the two lovers. Intriguingly, in certain cases, in the way this relationship is articulated on the page we see how the traditional *topoi* make way for an intimate dimension which seems to spring from some more private autobiographical source.

It is now time to set aside the theme of the relationship in order to examine more in depth the female portrait Ariosto paints. This follows the general plan of this thesis, whose second part is concerned with a closer observation of the world that surrounds the poet.

To speak of the female figure in Ariosto means, it would appear, to return to a subject which has received an inordinate amount of scholarly attention: indeed, especially with relation to the *Furioso*, critics have long tried (not always effortlessly) to extrapolate the author's position with regard to the *querelle des femmes*.[1] The debate, however, is far from having run its full course. Indeed, another possible declension of the female theme, the stereotypical representation of beauty, has received less attention, leaving us uncertain as to Ariosto's relationship to the tradition of the *descriptio puellae*. Studies on this subject (which nevertheless remain relevant) have rarely focused exhaustively on Ariosto,

[1] On female characters and/or on the *questione femminile* in the *Furioso*, see at least Tomalin 1976; Peirone 1988; Shemek 1989; Finucci 1992; Mac Carthy 2007; Stoppino 2012; Weaver 2016. On proto-feminist readings of the poem, see Shemek 2018.

and the preferred line of investigation has been to examine the wider range of the *topos* and to position Ariosto within this range. Moreover, in the cases where Ariosto has been considered, the focus has been exclusively on the *Furioso,* and his other works have been entirely overlooked.

The *descriptio puellae* in the lyrics will therefore be my focus in this chapter. Before starting, however, I will give a brief overview of the salient features of the *topos,* for which Giovanni Pozzi's studies (later developed by Amedeo Quondam) remain relevant.[2] In his close analysis of the detailing of the portrayals of women in terms of words, syntax, and the ordering of concepts, Pozzi had identified two possible options for the Renaissance catalogue of beauties: the *canone breve,* established by Petrarch, which selects only a few physical attributes of the poet's beloved (her hair, eyes, eyebrows, lips, cheeks, and occasionally her neck),[3] and the *canone lungo*, more strongly linked to its medieval precedents and fully developed by Boccaccio (in his *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine*, *Filocolo* and *Teseida*), in which the description includes several more details (the chin, feet, and breast as well as some detail of clothes). Both types, according to Pozzi, can be detected in the *Furioso*: the portraits of Alcina (*Fur*., VII 11-16 ABC) and of Olimpia (*Fur*., XI 64-72 C) are examples of *canone lungo*; that of Angelica (*Fur*., IX 83-84 AB; X 95-96 C) follows the *canone breve.* Analysing the structure of the canone, Pozzi showed that it adopts fixed metaphors for each physical feature, recalling tactile or visual sensations (e.g. roses in place of lips; gold for hair) and highlighted the symmetrical distribution of such metaphorical attributes, a fact that leads to the presence of regular schemes. This – intrinsically 'visual' – pattern seems (again in Pozzi's view) an attempt to reproduce, through the tools of rhetoric, the traits of painting, in a textual situation

[2] See Pozzi 1974; Pozzi 1979; Quondam 1991; Pozzi 1993.
[3] On the Petrarchan canon, see also Fedi 2007, 65-74.

where the various elements of the description have no visual potential, the canon being by its very nature highly formalized and non-referential.[4] Indeed, the history of the canon has often been interpreted in the perspective of *ut pictura poësis*, i.e. as an effort to mirror the process of portraiture, by aiming at visual effects through non-pictorial devices.[5]

The characterizations put forward by Pozzi's rhetorical-semiological method, however, contain the risk of an excessive rigidity, and this has prompted María de las Nieves Muñiz Muñiz to adopt a fresh approach to the question of the *descriptio puellae* in her recent rich monograph.[6] Here, rather than the structure of the canon (whose typologies, as she demonstrates, are much more varied than has hitherto been supposed), what is foregrounded is the minute analysis of its components: by re-examining the various branches of the *topos* through the centuries, the aim is to demonstrate the continuity of certain aesthetic ideals – beginning from the classics, through medieval Latin and Franco-Provençal literature, down to medieval and Renaissance Italian literature. Muñiz shows, in other words, that the ideal female physiognomy, as well as the use of certain metaphorical attributes, can be traced much further back than the early Renaissance (although the role played in their stabilization by Petrarch and Boccaccio remains unquestioned).

While he is apparently faithful to the canon, Ariosto in fact turns out to be a subtle and often bold innovator. Moreover, as we shall see, the analysis itself of the poems obliges us to extend the scope of the field. It would be an artificial constriction, in this as in other cases, to limit the *topos* exclusively to its aesthetic components, while it extends to observations on the psychology and behaviour of the woman described, which are also

[4] Pozzi 1979, 7-22. On the idealized nature of the *canone*, see also Quondam 1991, 291-328.

[5] Among the most recent inquiries recalling the history of the concept of *ut pictura poësis*, from its theoretical formulations in classical antiquity to the Cinquecento, see Quondam 1991, 83-95; 310; Jossa 2008, 245-256.

[6] Muñiz Muñiz 2018.

subject to stylization. There is, in other words, an actual 'inner canon', which has not so far enjoyed the same critical recognition as the physical canon. This inner canon, which was well developed in classical elegy (as will be seen later), is also a constant of Italian poetry from its very origins – one need only think of Cino, who, in his canzone CXXIII (*Oimè lasso, quelle trezze bionde*), after describing the aesthetic *topos*, continued with the memory of the 'caro diporto e bel contegno', of 'dolce accoglienza' and the 'accorto intelletto' (14-16). It is, however, in the Cinquecento that this canon acquires complexity, thanks also to a new and profound interest in the female world. This interest, which was both concrete and theoretical, is central to Ariosto's writing, and will be the subject of the second part of this chapter.

1. Experiments on the canon

While it is impossible to show exactly how Ariosto's development of the theme evolved through time, we do however have two works which take it as their subject and which were certainly written in the early years of the Cinquecento: a sonnet belonging to the uncollected poems, and capitolo XXI (the one on the happy night of love, for which see also Chapter II, 1.1). It is opportune to analyse them now in order to show how this theme early became for Ariosto a central subject not just for reflection but also for experimentation. At the end of this section I will also examine another text, whose dating is this time uncertain, but which however can be included with the other two precisely on account of its underlying aim to revise the canon.

1.1. A *tenzone* on the *descriptio puellae*

As I mentioned in the Introduction, sonnet XXXIII ed. Fatini (*Se senza fin son le cagion ch'io v'ami*) was written by Ariosto as a personal contribution to a *tenzone*, datable

to ca. 1504, between the members of a Venetian society called the 'Compagnia degli Amici'. The theme on which these poets confronted each other was precisely the *descriptio puellae*. As Gnocchi argued, the *tenzone* probably originated as a response to the sonnet by Bembo *Crin d'oro crespo et d'ambra tersa et pura*,[7] and it consisted in a triptych of sonnets by Niccolò Tiepolo and one sonnet by Vincenzo Querini, in addition to Ariosto's poem.

This *tenzone* has recently been re-examined by Giacomo Vagni, who has also attempted to establish the exact succession of the poems (first Querini, then Tiepolo, then Ariosto).[8] The link between these poems may be evinced from the presence in all of them of the same line, which is repeated in an almost identical way, although it is placed at the very end of the poems of the *amici* (see, for instance, 'senza fin le cagion perch'io sempre ami', l. 14 of Tiepolo's third sonnet),[9] while it is used as an opening line by Ariosto.

It is worthwhile to quote Ariosto's poem in full:

> Se senza fin son le cagion ch'io v'ami,
> e sempre di voi pensi e in voi sospiri,
> come volete, oimè! ch'io mi ritiri,
> e senza fin d'esser con voi non brami?
> Son la fronte, le ciglia e quei legami
> del mio cor, aurei crini, e quei zaffiri
> de' bei vostri occhi, e lor soavi giri,
> donna, per trarmi a voi tutti ésca ed ami.
> Son di coralli, perle, avorio e latte,
> di che fur labra, denti, seno e gola,
> alle forme degli angeli ritratte;
> son del gir, de lo star, d'ogni parola,
> d'ogni sguardo soave, insomma, fatte
> le reti, onde a intricarsi il mio cor vola. (*Rime,* XXXIII ed. Fatini)

[7] *Le rime,* 5,1-8: 'Crin d'oro crespo et d'ambra tersa et pura / ch'a l'aura in su la neve ondeggi et vole, / occhi soavi et più chiari che 'l sole / da far giorno seren la notte oscura, / riso ch'acqueta ogni aspra pena et dura, / rubini et perle, ond'escono parole / sì dolci ch'altro ben l'alma non vòle, / man d'avorio, che i cor' distringe e fura'.
[8] Vagni 2019, 214-217.
[9] Ibid., 216.

The sonnet provides a detailed account of the lady's beautiful features as prescribed by the *canone breve*, most of which are associated with their typical attributes: milk with the throat (because of its whiteness); ivory with the breast (whiteness + hardness), pearls with the teeth (whiteness + hardness + lucidity) coral with lips (redness), sapphires and gold respectively with the eyes and hair. But most important is the scheme: the first two items ('fronte' and 'ciglia'), which are not paired with metaphors, are followed by two items ('crini' and 'occhi'), which are preceded by metaphorical attributes, and by a sequence of four metaphorical words each of which refers to one of the items in the following line ('labra', 'denti', 'seno' and 'gola'). Moreover, at the end of the second quatrain and of the second tercet the overall effect of the items mentioned is metaphorized by an image expressing the idea of 'alluring' ('ésca ed ami'; 'reti'),[10] thus creating a macro-structure into which the others fit.

Ariosto's main concern seems to balance *variatio* with symmetry. These early poems constitute an important divergence from the late-Quattrocento panorama, in which the catalogue of beauties, as Pozzi pointed out, was solely achieved through the strategy of accumulation, often without any enhanced connection between items and metaphorical words.[11] But also from the point of view of its contents, the poem insinuates a subtle variation in the traditional canon, which emerges even more clearly if we compare it with the other sonnets of the *tenzone*. While in the latter (as well as in Bembo's sonnet *Crin d'oro crespo*) the entire sonnet is taken up with praise of the (physical and, in Tiepolo, also moral) attributes of the woman, Ariosto's sonnet includes – in fact, begins with – a description of the speaker's feelings. The classic situation of lyric poetry is hinted at, with a female figure 'rejecting' or pushing away the male speaker, who strongly desires her

[10] On the idea of 'tying' in Ariosto's lyrics, see Chapter II, 5.
[11] Pozzi 1979, 8-11.

presence (‘esser con voi’); the aim of the list of the attributes, moreover, is to illustrate the ‘allure’ they exert over the speaker. This serves the function of dispelling the absoluteness of the portrait of the woman and making it more psychological. This is not – it should be stated – an isolated case in contemporary poetry, but it should nevertheless be brought to the fore, as it constitutes the earliest manifestation of a trend that will become visible also in later poems by Ariosto, and that will in fact come to be seen as one of their typical features.

1.2. The naked beauty: capitolo XXI

The first truly original element in Ariosto’s use of the canon regards the description of female nudes. We should call again into question capitolo XXI (*O più che al giorno a me lucida et chiara*), which, as I said in Chapter II, was written early in the Cinquecento.

Here is an excerpt in which the narrating voice indulges in contemplating the naked beauties of his beloved:

> Quanto più giova in sì suave effetto
> pascer la vista hor de gli occhi divini,
> hor de la fronte, hor de l’eburneo petto;
> mirar le ciglia et l’aurei crespi crini,
> mirar le rose in su le labra sparse,
> porvi la bocca et non temer de’ spini;
> mirar le membra, a cui non può uguargliarse
> altro candore e giudicar mirando
> che le gratie del ciel non vi fur scarse,
> et quando a un senso satisfar, et quando
> all’altro, sì che ne fruiscan tutti,
> et pur un sol non ne lasiare in bando. (*Rime,* XXI 43-54)

Rather than to the texts derived from Propertius (which simply recount the enjoyment of the sexual act),[12] this catalogue of the various parts of the woman’s body may be linked

[12] See Chapter II, 1.1.1.

to a poem from Ovid's *Amores*. Indeed, the two poems present a similar use of anaphoric exclamations as well as a striking resemblance in the scene they describe (Ovid, who is about to have sex with Corinna, unveils her and contemplates her beauty):

> Deripui tunicam – nec multum rara nocebat;
> pugnabat tunica sed tamen illa tegi.
> Quae cum ita pugnaret, tamquam quae vincere nollet,
> victa est non aegre proditione sua.
> Ut stetit ante oculos posito velamine nostros,
> in toto nusquam corpore menda fuit.
> Quos umeros, quales vidi tetigique lacertos!
> forma papillarum quam fuit apta premi!
> quam castigato planus sub pectore venter!
> quantum et quale latus! quam iuvenale femur!
> Singula quid referam? nil non laudabile vidi
> et nudam pressi corpus ad usque meum. (*Amores*, I 5,13-24)

The eventual outcome of this poetic situation, as it is reworked in Ariosto's Italian capitolo, is a particular version of the Petrarchan *canone breve*, developed following the traditional top to bottom rule (apart from the switch between eyebrows and hair) and introducing metaphorical attributes ('eburneo petto'; 'rose'; 'aurei crespi crini').[13]

The combination between Petrarchan language and a situation dominated by eroticism may be striking to the reader. In fact, it testifies to some extent to Ariosto's continuity

[13] An earlier version of this capitolo exists, where l. 46 is: 'et le ciglia mirar d'ebano e i crini' (Finazzi 2002-2003, 228-230). Finazzi, evidently referring the attribute 'd'ebano' to both 'ciglia' and 'crini', maintains that version of the poem was dedicated to a woman with brown hair; this detail would be changed by Ariosto to make the capitolo fit a project he had for a Petrarchan canzoniere. However, as brown hair is too uncommon a feature for a canonical description, one finds it easier to link 'd'ebano' only with 'ciglia', and suppose that the hair is blonde. See Equicola, *Libro de natura de amore*, 1.2: '[poets] fanno tranquillo de oro li crini, de hebeno le ciglia, […]'. This attribute also appears in two of the poems involved in the *tenzone* on female beauty: Tebaldeo writes 'Dui vivi soli, or fino, hebeno raro' (cited below in this section); Tiepolo 'ciglia d'hebeno tranquille' (l. 2 of *Crespe chiome d'or fin, serena fronte*, cited in Vagni 2019, 215). The brownness of eyebrows may seem a curious feature, but was actually common in the canon of beauty (since women used to dye only their hair blonde) and is also found in Italian medieval poetry. See Renier 1885, 41-42, and Torraca 1888, 339-342; on hair colouring, see Fedi 2007, *passim*; Motta 2018, 96-99. There are, of course, some cases of brown-haired women in literature preceding Ariosto, but are actually exceptions. Among those, we could mention the description of Eleuterillide in *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (Fedi 2007, 43-44) and Correggio, *Rime*, 376, 31-32: 'le chiome su il bel fronte, in ch'io mi annodo, / d'ebano loro, e quel de avolio e lacte'– regarding the latter, Fenzi 2006, 153 suggests that the author may have wished to conceal the true addressee of the poem, Lucrezia Borgia, who was actually blonde. On brown hair in Renaissance literature, see also Motta 2018, 95-96, who also provides figurative references. On the blonde type, see *infra*. On hair in the context of the *descriptio puellae*, see also Macinante 2011.

with the Quattrocento tradition. In analysing a sample of authors from that period, Beatrice Bartolomeo observes that their version of the canon (both the long and the brief) occasionally also includes 'gli elementi più sensuali della fisicità femminile' (some examples will be given below), thereby setting up an ambiguous relationship with the Petrarchan model.[14] The validity of these considerations may also be extended to the first years of the Cinquecento, especially within the Ferrarese milieu. To see this, it is sufficient to examine the sonnet by Tebaldeo entitled *Dui vivi soli, or fino, hebeno raro*, which, very close to its start, mentions 'dui pomi, quai non so se altro horto rende, / che cela un velo ingiurïoso e avaro'.[15] Such a sensual hint would not surprise us if we were to place the poem exclusively within the typology outlined by Bartolomeo. This reading is complicated, however, by the fact that this sonnet, which is datable between 1502-1508, was probably intended by Tebaldeo (as Simone Albonico has suggested) as an imitation of Bembo's *Crin d'oro crespo et d'ambra tersa et pura*:[16] a decidedly singular homage since, in placing the accent on sensuality, Tebaldeo strikingly diverges from Bembo. To this end he takes up a hint from a poem by Tito Vespasiano Strozzi (*Laudat Anthiam a forma et moribus*), which Bembo himself had used, albeit in a form that was 'cleansed' precisely from this sensuality.[17] As Vagni, who has pondered the dynamics of this imitation, has observed, Tebaldeo's sonnet should be read as an an actual 'Ferrarese reply' to Bembo's Neoplatonic concept of woman and of love;[18] moreover, according to the scholar, the abovementioned *tenzone* originated from the desire of the 'Compagnia degli Amici' to express their agreement with Bembo's concept, precisely against Tebaldeo.

[14] Bartolomeo 2012, 43.
[15] Tebaldeo, *Rime estravaganti*, 325,3-4.
[16] Albonico 2017, 93-94.
[17] Ibid., 94-95.
[18] Vagni 2019, 213.

If I have briefly diverged from my main argument, it has been to further clarify how the theme of the *descriptio puellae* was a vital and much debated one among the early sixteenth-century poets of Northern Italy.

Within this debate may be placed the nude in Ariosto's capitolo. Indeed, it should be added that in this case Ariosto follows neither Tebaldeo's path nor the fifteenth-century 'Padanian' line explored by Bartolomeo. The latter tends to allude – rather than explicitly refer to – any bodily part that may be eroticized: in other words, to my knowledge there is here no equivalent to Ariosto's 'mirar le membra'[19] (though I should qualify this statement by adding that Quattrocento poetry has yet to be systematically examined, and many relevant authors are not consultable in modern editions).

Ariosto, therefore, goes beyond contemporary elaborations on this theme, including those in Latin by the two Strozzi, and fully embraces the classical model: in addition to the Ovidian passage, it is worth mentioning the mythological line, where the naked woman appears in scenes reminiscent of the 'bathing beauty' iconography.[20]

1.3. Some parallels with the *Furioso*

The descriptions of Angelica and, especially, of Olimpia, in the *Furioso*, are also actually nudes. These descriptions occur when the two princesses, imprisoned (at different points of the story) in the island of Ebuda, are tied to a rock so that they may be devoured by the sea monster that haunts the island. That a fully developed Petrarchan canon (far more elaborate here than in the capitolo) should be applied to a naked body is an outstanding achievement: it is surprising that even the most accurate readers of these excerpts have overlooked this point. Or perhaps, rather than overlooked, it has been

[19] However, a similar phrasing can be found with regard to the *femmina balba* in *Purg*., XIX 10-12: 'Io la mirava: e come 'l sol conforta / le fredde membra che la notte aggrava, / così lo sguardo mio […]'.
[20] Pozzi 1979, 25-26.

interpreted through the lens of *ut pictura poësis*, i.e. as a case of *ekphrasis* of figurative themes involving nudes. According to those scholars who subscribe to this position, this imitation presupposes two conditions: first, that Ariosto was referencing actual works of art, especially classical sculpture and the revival of its tradition in Ferrara;[21] secondly, that it was his *intention* to mirror the traditional pictorial procedure of giving nudes a narrative/mythological pretext (see Titian's Venus of Dresden): in Pozzi's words, that would '[rivestire] di un pretesto narrativo gl'indugi voyeuristici sul corpo delle sue eroine'.[22] Such interpretations, which overall point (correctly) to a classicizing conception on Ariosto's part, were undoubtedly prompted by the numerous figurative metaphors and similes he adopts. For instance, Phidias (*Fur*., XI 69,4 C) and Zeuxis (*Fur*., XI 71 C) are called upon to express the perfection of Olimpia's body; the author even goes as far as to reverse the traditional logical priority of Nature over art (*ars simia naturae*) in his description of Angelica: 'Creduto avria che fosse statua finta / o d'alabastro o d'altri marmi illustri / Ruggiero, o su lo scoglio così avinta / per artificio di scultori industri' (*Fur*., IX 84,1-4 AB; X 96,1-4 C).[23]

But in fact, Ariosto's challenge here addresses not just the visual arts, but also lyric tradition itself.[24] Arguably, he openly reworks the canon, with the aim of conveying eroticism through the same means that were used to express a different ideal of beauty (in which sensuality was only alluded to):

> *Un velo non ha pure*, in che richiuda
> i bianchi gigli e le vermiglie rose, (*Fur*., IX 83,5-6 AB; X 95,5-6 C)
>
> ma discendendo giù da le mammelle,
> *le parti che solea coprir la stola*,
> fur di tanta escellenzia […] (*Fur*., XI 67,5-7 C)

[21] Farinella 2016, 46-47.
[22] Pozzi 1979, 26.
[23] Farinella 2016, 41-42.
[24] As is also hypothesized, especially with regard to Angelica, by Padoan 1978, 347-370.

> I rilevati fianchi e le belle anche,
> e netto più che specchio il ventre piano,
> pareano fatti, e quelle coscie bianche,
> da Fidia a torno, o da più dotta mano.
> *Di quelle parti debbovi dir anche*
> *che pur celare ella bramava invano?* (*Fur*., XI 69, 1-6 C – italics mine)

The insistence on the absence of veils ironically contrasts with the *topos*, dating back to Ovid[25] and massively featured in Boccaccio[26] as well as in some Quattrocento authors (as was anticipated in the previous section),[27] of the gown that hardly conceals the limbs, but still allows the observer's imagination to roam its delights. As a consequence, new parts of the body, i.e. hips, haunches, belly, thighs, are introduced into Olimpia's portrait, and associated with new attributes (mirror for the belly, while the others are likened to sculpted limbs). It is also highly significant that the narrator juxtaposes, albeit implicitly, this type of beauty to the traditional 'dressed' (or half-dressed) canonical beauty, and states the superior effectiveness of the former in triggering love and passion (that of Oberto, in this case; and it is also said that if only Bireno could have seen Olimpia without veils, he would never have abandoned her).[28]

Finally, I would suggest that in Olimpia's description Ariosto might still feel, well after writing capitolo XXI (the episode was added only to the 1532 version of the poem), the echoes of Ovid's poem I 5 of the *Amores*. The similarity regards the newly introduced body parts: 'netto più che specchio il ventre piano' corresponds to 'planus sub pectore venter', whereas the succession of 'quantum et quale latus' and 'quam iuvenale femur'

[25] See the descriptions of Daphne in *Met*., I 502: 'siqua latent, meliora putat' and of Cidippe in *Her*., XX 62-63: 'cetera si possem laudare, beatior essem, / nec dubito, totum quin sibi par sit opus'.
[26] Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine,* IX 26-8; *Filocolo,* III, XI 5-7; *Teseida,* XII 63. See Maffia Scariati 2008, 472-473.
[27] Examples of the Quattrocento employment of the theme of the female 'hidden parts' are provided in Bartolomeo 2012, 44-45. See, e.g., Giusto de' Conti, *Rime estravaganti,* XIII 10-11: 'dolce parte secrete, di che spesso / dolcemente Amor meco ne ragiona'; Correggio, *Rime,* 179,12-13: 'la gola e il pecto e quelle che nascose, / per non dar morte a tanti, usa a tenerle'.
[28] *Fur*., XI 72,1-4 C: 'Io non credo che mai Bireno, nudo / vedesse quel bel corpo; ch'io son certo / che stato non saria mai così crudo, / che l'avesse lasciata in quel deserto'.

reminds us of 'I rilevati fianchi e le belle anche'. This may further support the hypothesis that the inspiration for Ariosto's classicism was also literary, in addition to being figurative.

Through the development of a canon of the naked beauty, therefore, Ariosto links tradition up to its classical origin.

1.4. Beauty and irony

In his nudes, Ariosto allowed the reader to feel the differences that distinguish them from the regular canon. This has been noted by Muñiz, who reads the female descriptions in the *Furioso* both as a progressive approach to the concept of *ut pictura poësis,* and as an ambiguous and unsettling dissolution of the ideal of beauty:[29] the most glaring example of this, which ought here to be briefly re-examined, is the scene of Alcina's epiphany. Following Boccaccio's example, the woman is dressed, and the typical allusion to hardly concealed parts of the body also appears ('Ben si può giudicar che corrisponde / a quel ch'appar di fuor quel che s'asconde', *Fur*., VII 14,7-8 BC). However, Ariosto once again establishes a comparison with the visual arts ('Di persona era tanto ben formata, / quanto me' finger san pittori industri') that allows him to play on the ambiguity between the real and the fictitious. As a matter of fact, the emphasis on the perfection of Alcina's physical appearance, which is so accurately described as to make the reader assume that it is natural ('gli angelici sembianti nati in cielo', *Fur*., VII 15,7 ABC), contrasts with what will be later revealed as her true essence. In VII 72-73 all her beauties will turn out to be an enchantment, which, lifted, allows the sorceress's true ugliness to shine through (this, in turn, is described in a sort of anti-canonical counterpoint to the earlier description).[30]

[29] Muñiz Muñiz 2018, 90-91.

[30] *Fur*., VII 72-73 ABC: '[…] donna sì laida, che la terra tutta / né la più vecchia avea né la più brutta. // Pallido, crespo e macilente avea / Alcina il viso, il crin raro e canuto, / sua statura a sei palmi non giungea: / ogni dente di bocca era caduto; / che più d'Ecuba e più de la Cumea, / ed avea più d'ogn'altra mai vivuto.

Once again, a difference is perceived between a somehow expected type of description, and its (equally unexpected) subversion.

Muñiz's 'manieristic' reading may therefore be shared; nevertheless, I believe irony plays a more important role than has been recognized by her in Ariosto's use of such devices.[31] This is supported precisely by a comparison with the *rime*, where the irony of the lyric voice seems to cast doubt on the validity itself of the canon. In sonnet IX (*Madonna sète bella et bella tanto*), the speaker appears at first to be straightforwardly following the *canone lungo*, listing the lady's neck, her breast, arm and hand, as well as alluding to the concealed parts of her body ('quanto se ne crede', 11). However, in the last tercet the whole catalogue is unexpectedly dismantled, as the poet's own faithfulness is proclaimed superior to all those beauties:[32]

Madonna sète bella et bella tanto
ch'io non veggio di voi cosa più bella:
miri la fronte o l'una et l'altra stella
che mi scorgon la via col lume santo,
miri la bocca a cui sola do vanto,
che dolce ha il riso e dolce ha la favella;
et l'aureo crine onde Amor fece quella
rete che mi fu tesa d'ogni canto;
o di terso alabastro il collo e il seno,
o braccia, o mano, e quanto finalmente
di voi si mira, et quanto se ne crede.
Tutto è mirabil certo, non di meno
non starò ch'io non dica arditamente
che più mirabil molto è la mia fede. (*Rime*, IX)

/ Ma sì l'arti usa al nostro tempo ignote, / che bella e giovanetta parer puote' (on this passage, see Bolzoni 2010, 189-193). A key precedent for the subversion of canonical categories in the description of the lady is *Purg*., XIX 7-9: 'mi venne in sogno una femmina balba, / ne li occhi guercia, e sovra i piè distorta, / con le man monche, e di colore scialba'.

[31] Among the most recent studies on the irony of the *Furioso*, see Musarra 2013; Sangirardi 2014; Rivoletti 2014; Jossa 2016.

[32] According to Jossa 2016, 190, Ariosto's irony is a 'strumento dissacratorio e insinuante […] non starà in un preciso repertorio di pratiche, ma in un atteggiamento diffuso che mette sempre in discussione ciò che è scontato e propone continuamente l'imprevedibile'. Cabani 2000 [2016], 114-116 argues in favour of an ironic reading specifically of this poem.

The trigger for the irony is the adjective *mirabile*: a former keyword of the *dolce stil novo*, in which it always signified the divine essence of the lady, the word now drops that exclusivity of reference and connects instead with the poet's faithfulness. Why is it so 'remarkable'? The implied idea is that the woman, albeit beautiful, does not deserve to be loved (probably because she behaves coldly towards him). The poet processes his feelings from the outside and recognizes their strangeness, without, however, yet being able to fully detach himself from them – a mechanism, this, with its admixture of lucidity on the one hand and difficulty in behaving rationally on the other, that we have already seen in other poems examined in Chapter II. In this case, the sudden shift in the sonnet's centre of gravity – from the beloved to the poet, from idealized beauty to the psychological relationship proper – combined with the semantic modification of *mirabile* produce an effect of concreteness: a process whose core could already be glimpsed in sonnet XXXIII ed. Fatini (see above), but that here turns into a witty desecration of the *descriptio puellae*.

Here too, moreover, the revisiting of the *topos* is filtered through the classics: it is probable that the sonnet derives directly from the description of Daphne in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as may be inferred from the disposition of the elements, from the anaphor of verbs of perception ('miri') and from the emphasis on the eyes (compared to stars) and the lips.

> […] videt igne micantes
> sideribus similes oculos, videt oscula, quae non
> est vidisse satis; laudat digitosque manusque
> bracchiaque et nudos media plus parte lacertos:
> si qua latent, meliora putat (*Met*., I 498-502)[33]

[33] See also *Amores*, III 2,35-36: 'Suspicor ex istis et cetera posse placere, / qui bene sub tenui condita veste latent'.

This is a further confirmation of the exquisitely literary (rather than figurative) nature of this *topos* in Ariosto's handling.

2. Woman's beauty in its social context

The irony applied by Ariosto to the catalogue of beauties, as well as his elaboration of a provocative 'canon of nudities', belong to the same process of de-absolutization of the *topos,* which has the effect of leading the female figure back to an earthly dimension.

This attitude also induces him to focus on another, equally earthly, aspect: the social context in which the woman's charms exert their power. This happens in canzone 50 (*Non so s'io potrò ben chiudere in rima*), which recalls the circumstances of his first falling in love with Alessandra Benucci (and is in fact the only document we have that regards that event).[34] The event is described as having taken place on 24 June 1513 in Florence, during the celebrations for St John the Baptist. The reader is not told how much time has elapsed since then; nevertheless, as the canzone is not featured in **Vr**, it may be placed at a later period.[35] Whatever its dating may be, there nevertheless exists a strong affinity, in terms of the author's strategy of portrayal, with the lyrics included only in the **F** branch (which have been analysed in Chapter II, and which will be recalled where relevant): this leads us to think there must have been a precise and cohesive stage in Ariosto's elaboration of the *topos*, perhaps actually prompted by the influence of a specific dedicatee, namely Alessandra.

[34] Fatini 1934, 137; 196-202.
[35] Finazzi 2002-2003, 284.

2.1. The ‘lady among other ladies’

The situation described in canzone 50 is inescapably reminiscent of *Rvf*, XXIII (Petrarch’s canzone on the first day he fell in love, which is echoed in many places).[36] What emerges from such a comparison is that Ariosto, unlike Petrarch, endeavours to place the fact in its context, a context that is even assigned partial responsibility for the event. The speaker is already acquainted with his future beloved when he sees her on the ‘fateful day’. His is not a case of love at first sight: rather, it is described as a confused sentiment, at first unrecognized by the poet himself because of the difficulties involved in this realization (the allusion is probably to Alessandra’s husband, Tito di Lionardo Strozzi, who was still alive at that time),[37] and finally breaking out when he becomes fully aware of Alessandra’s charm. Such charm is in turn a combination of her own personal qualities and the atmosphere in which the meeting takes place: a different context, Ariosto seems to say, would not have prompted his desire to the same extent. The object of love is thus deprived of the absoluteness of her powers, the very thing that had invariably qualified her as ‘divine’ in the lyric tradition.

It is for this reason that the first stanzas of the canzone contain such an accurate illustration of the feast of St John the Baptist (the 1513 one must have been even more elaborate than usual, as it also honoured Giovanni de’ Medici, who had been recently elected Pope Leo X):

> Ne la tosca città che questo giorno
> più riverente honora,
> la fama havea a spettacoli solenni
> fatto raccor, non che i vicini in torno,
> ma li lontani anchora;
> anchor io, vago di mirar, vi venni. […]

[36] See Bianchi’s commentary in Ariosto 1992, 203-209.
[37] Tito died in 1515 (Catalano 1930-1931, I, 405). See *Rime*, 50,23-33.

[…] da preghi vinta et liberali inviti
di vostra gente, con honesta et cara
compagnia, a far più liete
le feste, a far più splendidi i conviti
con li doni infiniti
in ch'ad ogn'altra il ciel v'ha posta inanzi,
venuta erate dianzi, […]

Porte, finestre, vie, templi, theatri
vidi pieni de donne
a giuochi, a pompe, a sacrificii intente,
et mature et acerbe, et figlie et matri
ornate in varie gonne;
altre star a conviti, altre agilmente
danzare; et finalmente
non vidi, né senti' ch'altri vedesse,
chi di beltà potesse,
d'honestà, cortesia, d'alti sembianti
voi pareggiar, non che passarvi inanti. (*Rime*, 50,56-88)

This description is probably reminiscent of an elegy by Tito Vespasiano Strozzi: the situation is actually similar, as Tito recalls his falling in love during the feast of St George in Ferrara (*Eroticon liber I*, II 1-4: 'Candida lux aderat maiis vicina Calendis, / Quam festam veteres instituistis avi; / quam pio solemni celebrat Ferraria cultu, / Aurea cum admissis praemia ponit equis').[38] In addition, it reminds us of some passages from the *Furioso*. One is the joust of Damascus in *Fur*., XV 20,5-8 – 21,1-2 AB; XVII C ('Adorna era ogni porta, ogni finestra / di finissimi drappi e di tapeti, / ma più di belle e ben ornate donne / di ricche gemme e di superbe gonne. // Vedeasi celebrar dentr'alle porte, / in molti lochi, solazzevol balli'). Also, the festive occasion that draws gentlemen and ladies from far and wide is a typically chivalric situation, and it is often associated with tournaments (see *Fur*., XI 6,3-4 AB; XIII 6,3-4 C: 'Trasse la fama ne le terre nostre / cavallieri a giostrar di più paesi').

[38] Quoted from Strozzi 1916, 4-5.

The same atmosphere is recalled in sonnet 56 (*Qui fu dove il bel crin già con sì stretti* – for which see also Chapter II, 4.2), which also describes the poet falling in love and is notable for featuring the famous opening syntagm of the *Furioso*, 'donne e cavallieri':[39]

> quel dì che donne et cavallieri elletti
> haveste, quai non hebbe Peleo a' suoi
> conviti […] (*Rime*, 56,5-7)

Precisely this insistence on the details of the festivity reveals how the epiphany of Alessandra moves away from the *topos* of the 'woman seen among other women', which may be traced back to the *Vita Nova* (and which enjoyed great success in later poetry),[40] and instead closer to the first appearance of Alcina in the *Furioso*:

> Non tanto il bel palazzo era escellente,
> perché vincesse ogn'altro di ricchezza,
> quanto ch'avea la più piacevol gente
> che fosse al mondo e di più gentilezza.
> Poco era l'un da l'altro differente
> e di fiorita etade e di bellezza:
> sola di tutti Alcina era più bella,
> sì come è bello il sol più d'ogni stella. (*Fur*., VII 10 ABC)
>
> […] spesso in conviti, e sempre stanno in feste,
> in giostre, in lotte, in scene, in bagno, in danza (*Fur*., VII 31,5-6 ABC)

The common ground is the context of splendour and refinement within which social interactions are enacted and made possible. This reminds us, of course, of the world of the court. As a matter of fact, the aforementioned excerpts may be compared to a passage from Ariosto's 1506 eclogue, in which one of the interlocutors, Tirsi, recalls the scene of the marriage between Duke Alfonso and Lucrezia (personified as the shepherds 'Alfenio' and 'Licoria'). The latter is seen 'in mezo onesta schiera / di bellissime donne, anzi pur

[39] This, in turn, derives from *Purg*., XIV 109: 'le donne e' cavalier, li affanni e li agi'; it also appears in *Rvf*, CCCLX 111: 'ch'a donne et cavalier' piacea il suo dire'. On this opening, see Zampese 2018.
[40] Occurrences of the theme are listed in de' Medici 1992, 84.

dive' (245-246). As in canzone 50, the statement about the protagonist's outstanding beauty is introduced by an *excursus* that describes a gathering of ladies, mentioning their different dresses and the ways in which they are grouped:

> Io vidi tutte l'altre, e vidi questa,
> or sole ad una ad una, e quando in coro,
> e quando in una e quando in altra vesta.
> Quale è il peltro all'argento, il rame all'oro,
> qual campestre papavero alla rosa,
> qual scialbo salce al sempre verde alloro,
> tale era ogn'altra alla novella sposa;
> gli occhi di tutti in lei stavano intenti,
> per mirarla obliando ogn'altra cosa. (*Rime*, eclogue I ed. Fatini, 250-258)

The relationship these examples entertain with the preceding tradition is characterized both by continuity and subtle innovation. The description of female beauty against the background of courtly entertainments often features in late-Quattrocento poetry, a typical situation being that which featured the 'dancing lady'. Sonnet 391 by Correggio, whose protagonist is also, most probably, Lucrezia Borgia,[41] is a good example of this:

> Se parla, uscir di lei se ode un concento
> che l'aër d'armonia dolce aura rende;
> se respirando dà el fiato e 'l reprende,
> de odor se empie quel loco in un momento;
> se in mezo ornate donne e in balli o festa
> non prima el delicato piede move,
> che ognun lei mira, e vincta ogni altra resta.
> E da i belli occhi suoi tal grazia piove
> che se ben nega a un che a danzar l'ha chiesta,
> col suo sguardo el sdegno puoi da quel rimove. (Correggio, *Rime*, 391,5-14)

Although Niccolò is inspired by Propertius, II 1 (a description of the attitudes in which the poet observes Cynthia: walking, playing the lyre, sleeping),[42] he eschews the self-

[41] Fenzi 2006, 157 and footnote.
[42] Propertius II 1,9-12: 'sive lyrae carmen digitis percussit eburnis, / miramur, facilis ut premat arte manus; / seu compescentis somnum declinat ocellos, / invenio causas mille poeta novas'.

celebratory lyric voice of this model, in which the poet uses description as an opportunity to proclaim his own poetic glory, and insists rather on describing the surrounding environment and the way in which Lucrezia interacts with it: her voice impresses the air; her breath fills it with a sweet scent; her movement in dance inspires awe in those who watch; her eyes bestow grace on her admirers. He uses a technique, therefore, close to that of Ariosto. However, this sonnet still pays tribute to the medieval representation of the lady as a divine creature (also on account of the socially superior status of its dedicatee), and echoes the *dolce stil novo*, this time with a proper use of the verb 'mirare'. An idealized conception of the court, and of the court lady, in other words, still prevails in it.

Something similar happens in the lyric poetry by Boiardo, from whose canzoniere I will single out only two examples, both of which capture Antonia, the young maiden beloved by the poet, in the act of dancing on a social occasion (in the former, she is accompanied by two mates):

> Qual nei prati de Idalo on de Cythero,
> se Amor de festegiar più voglia avea,
> le due sorelle agiunte a Pasithea
> cantando di sé cerchio intorno féro,
> tal se fece oggi e più legiadro e altero
> essendo in compagnia de la mia dea
> e de l'altre doe belle, onde tenea
> la cima di sua forza e il summo impero. (*Amorum libri tres*, I 30,1-8)

> Ben se è ricolto in questa lieta danza
> ciò che può far Natura, il Cielo e Amore;
> ben se dimostra a' nostri ochi di fuore
> ciò che dentro dal petto avean speranza.
> Ma quella dolce angelica sembianza
> che sempre fu scolpita nel mio core
> è pur la stella in cielo, in prato il fiore,
> che non che l'altre ma sé stessa avanza.
> Il suave tacere, il stare altero,
> lo accorto ragionar, il dolce guardo,
> il perregrin dansar ligiadro e novo

m'hano sì forte acceso nel pensiero,
che sin ne le medole avampo et ardo,
né altrove pace che in quel viso trovo. (Ibid., I 54)[43]

As in Correggio, in Boiardo the portrayal of the 'socialite' also obeys the criterion of the idealizing transfiguration. In I 30 this happens through the superimposition of myth (a simile is deployed between Antonia and Pasithea, one of the three Graces). In I 54, too, despite the 'realistic' reference to the choreography the young lady is following, which is described as new (11),[44] and despite the presence of a sensual vein (which originates precisely from the maiden's moves), the portrayal is ideal: Antonia is endowed with an 'angelica sembianza' (a phrase for which Zanato supplies parallels in Petrarch and Cavalcanti);[45] most importantly, the poet himself declares platonically that the image of his beloved engraved in his heart (which he imagines to live in all the elements of nature, the skies and the meadows) is more beautiful yet than the woman herself (5-8).

Against this pattern, as we have seen, Ariosto develops his descriptions in entirely 'human' terms. A related fact is his peculiar treatment of certain specific details of the female portrait: this aspect will be now examined.

2.2.Hairstyles

The description of the feast of St John is followed by a detailed portrayal of Alessandra. This proceeds from top to bottom and the parts described correspond to the *canone lungo*, with frequent borrowings of Petrarchan words and syntagms. The description, however, presents one striking feature: among Alessandra's beauties, her 'bel

[43] See also ibid., II 52,5-8: 'Quivi era Amor con la mia donna assiso, / né mai fu lieto e grazioso tanto; / alor questa aula de angelico canto / sembrava e de adorneza un paradiso' (the poet here sees Antonia at the court of Reggio Emilia).
[44] This is probably a *bassadanza*, as hypothesized by Zanato in his introduction to the poem (Boiardo 2003, 325).
[45] Ibid., 326.

volto' (89), her 'biondo et spesso crine' (91) and the 'avorio bianco' (96) of her shoulders receive only the briefest of mentions.[46] What is given importance is, instead, her fine outfit, and details of her hairstyle and clothing.

Stanza 9 and part of stanza 11 develop the representation of the woman's coiffure. It consists of a thin net that gathers the hair (parted in the middle) on the nape, and then flows down the neck and reaches as low as the shoulders; it is embellished by a laurel-shaped diadem decorated with gemstones.

> Trovò gran preggio anchor, dopo il bel volto,
> l'artifitio discreto
> ch'in aurei nodi il biondo et spesso crine
> in rara et sotil rete havea raccolto;
> soave ombra dirieto
> rendea al collo et inanzi alle confine
> de le guancie divine,
> et discendea fin all'avorio bianco
> del destro homero et manco. (*Rime*, 50,89-97)
>
> non senza [mistero] anchor fu quel gemmato alloro
> tra la serena fronte e il calle assunto
> che de le ricche chiome
> in parti ugual va dividendo l'oro. (Ibid., 113-116)

This is not the only instance of the special attention Ariosto pays to hair. In the *Furioso*, when Dalinda describes how she masqueraded as princess Ginevra, she highlights the '[…] rete pur d'or, tutta adombrata / di bei fiocchi vermigli al capo intorno' (*Fur*., V 47,3-4 ABC). Throughout the lyrics, too, the theme emerges frequently: I have already dwelt in Chapter II on the mini cycle of poems that was occasioned by the cut of Alessandra's hair (*Rime*, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57). It was in fact not uncommon, especially in Quattrocento lyric poetry, for authors to dedicate poems to the celebration of a single part of the body.[47]

[46] See Bolzoni 2010, 184-185.

[47] This is also noted by Bartolomeo 2012, 49-53, who, in the context of her analysis of sensual themes in fifteenth-century lyric poetry, focuses on four canzoni by Cosmico which celebrate solely the beloved's bosom. To these we may add countless instances from other authors: to mention but a few, Giusto's canzoniere famously dedicates poems to his lady's hand or eyes, highlighting the psychological effects that

In such cases, however, the object of the praise occupies the entire poem, and it is rather unusual to intermingle elements of the canon[48] with a 'realistic' occasion (although occasionality itself is a typical feature of courtly poetry of that period). This is something which also helps distinguish, by contrast, Ariosto's case, as the poet introduces reality in a context built up through Petrarchan *topoi* and classical mythology, producing an effect of good-tempered irony (as I have noted also in Chapter II).

Verisimilitude also underlies the details used to describe Alessandra's various hairstyles before her hair was cut:

> Son questi i nodi d'or, questi i capelli
> c'hor in treccia, hor in nastro et hor raccolti
> fra perle et gemme in mille modi, hor sciolti
> et sparsi all'aura sempre eran sì belli? (*Rime*, 53,1-4)

The gathered hair may seem an unrenounceable element of the canon, appearing in both Petrarch and Boccaccio.[49] As Muñiz observes,[50] it is principally the latter who develops this theme, by introducing garlands of flowers – the privileged beauty accessory of the *ninfe fiorentine*. While, however, Boccaccio's aim is not to guarantee verisimilitude, but rather to harmonize the female figure with the surrounding *locus amoenus* (and even in later poetry, the theme of the gathered hair follows these stylizations), Ariosto in these poems proposes a different, more concrete, version of the *topos*.

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their sight causes in the speaker (see Pantani's notes in Comboni-Zanato 2017, 222-241); Sasso wrote two sonnets (LXII-LXIII) on his lady's hand. Another relevant example is the *Amorosa opra* (a *prosimetro*) by Muzzarelli, within which a cycle of lyrics is dedicated to each physical trait of the woman, hair included (see Dilemmi 2000*bis*, 285-286).

[48] On the idealized nature of the *canone*, see Pozzi 1979, 22; Quondam 1991, 291-328.

[49] Actually, the canon normalized by Petrarch includes two versions of hairstyle: gathered hair and loose locks, the latter being the most frequent one (the celebrated 'capei d'oro a l'aura sparsi' of *Rvf*, XC 1). For this point, see Motta 2018, 85-90.

[50] Muñiz Muñiz 2018, 65-67; see also Maffia Scariati 2008, 476.

First, if we look at sonnet 53 again we shall note that, in lamenting the event that has taken place, he adopts the deictic 'questi', suggesting that the shorn locks are lying before him – in so doing Ariosto both evokes and disrupts the Petrarchan model (*Rvf*, CCCLIX 56: 'Son questi i capei biondi, et l'aureo nodo'), which used the same deictic in the context of a dream, in which Laura had appeared to Petrarch.[51]

Secondly, what makes these examples unique is the minute descriptive attention. Indeed, the styles of coiffure mentioned in the excerpts quoted above correspond quite closely to those we can still see in portraits of noblewomen painted in the early Cinquecento; they probably carried a symbolic meaning, linked to the values of nobility and chastity, as Uberto Motta underlines.[52] With regard to this it should be noted that Isabella d'Este was particularly fond of experimenting with hairstyles (*fogie da testa*) and is even credited with having invented some herself, such as the one worn at her brother Alfonso's wedding to Lucrezia Borgia in 1502, or the particular kind of turban named *capigliara*.[53]

2.2.1. A parallel: Trissino's *I ritratti*

In the literary panorama, one particularly relevant text in this context is Gian Giorgio Trissino's dialogue *I ritratti*, which, although only published in 1524, had already been finished ten years earlier.[54] Its contents should first be briefly recalled. In the dialogue, Vincentio Macro tells his interlocutor, Pietro Bembo, about a beautiful unknown woman he has just seen: from his description of her, Bembo eventually understands that she is

[51] At ll. 3-4 of sonnet 53, Ariosto also echoes the blatantly traditional syntagm from *Rvf*, XC 1 (see footnote 49).
[52] Motta 2018, 89: 'l'elaborazione di acconciature particolarmente complesse […] assunse una duplice e polisemica connotazione: quale segno di convenienza e decoro per le donne sposate, nonché prova della loro ricchezza, e come documento di tendenziale autogoverno del potenziale erotico ai capelli tradizionalmente connesso'. Motta also provides some figurative references.
[53] See Bonoldi 2002-2003, 59-69.
[54] See Pich 2010, 228-230.

Isabella d'Este, and draws on Macro's account for his own speech in her praise. The dialogue is important on many levels. First, it shows that an attempt was being made to enrich the canon. Indeed, the description is developed in three distinct steps: at the beginning, Macro recalls her physical features, following the *canone lungo*; then (in response to Bembo's plea) the details of her outfit; finally, Bembo's speech insists on Isabella's intellectual qualities. The second important fact is that Trissino also shows interest in an experimental approach. In order to exalt Isabella's perfect beauty, Macro offers a contemporary version of the myth of Zeuxis: just as Zeuxis had composed the portrait of Helena by using the features of the five fairest women of Croton, Isabella's beauty is the sum of five renowned Italian beauties of his time.[55] Lastly, in addition to pure beauty, the dialogue emphasizes other elements that were rapidly gaining importance in that cultural context: the ability to distinguish oneself in society through behaviour and through intellect – but to this we shall return.

What is most immediately relevant here is the second section of this literary portrait, which concerns Isabella's outfit. It should be observed that the description of Isabella's hair reminds us of Alessandra Benucci's choice of hairstyle in Ariosto's canzone:

> Ella, disse Macro, aveva i capegli in capo diffusi, in guisa, che sopra i candidi, e dilicati umeri ricadeano; e questi tutti erano raccolti da una rete di seta di color tanè, con maestrevole artificio lavorata, i groppi de la quale mi pareano essere di finissimo oro; e fra mezo le maglie di questa rete, le quali erano alquanto larghette, vi si vedeano scintillare i capegli […]. Ne la sommità poi de la fronte, dove questi in due parti si divideno, vi aveva un bellissimo, e fiammeggiante Rubino, dal quale una lucidissima e grossa perla pendeva […][56]

[55] Trissino 1729, 271-272.
[56] Ibid., 272-273.

However, unlike Isabella's, Alessandra's hairstyle – though elegant – is not precious in a showy way. Ariosto presents it exactly as it must have been, suited to the social status of its owner. Moderation, moreover, is counted as a positive quality, and is actually the highlight of Alessandra's portrait: the expression 'artifitio discreto' (90) should be duly noted as it suggests at the same time the elaborateness of her look and her ability in concealing the effort behind it (in direct reference to Horace, *Odes*, I 5, 'simplex munditiis'). Thus, Alessandra perfectly conforms to the aesthetic ideal of moderation of the Renaissance, which Baldassar Castiglione in his *Libro del Cortegiano* labels as 'sprezzatura'.[57]

2.3.Clothing

Returning to canzone 50, after her hair, Ariosto launches into a description of Alessandra's gown, which she herself has embroidered (with 'aco dotta', 109). Alessandra's sewing skills are also probably drawn from reality; they also feature in sonnet 51, where the woman is caught in the act of reproducing on her dress the pattern embroidered on another:

> Aventurosa man, beato ingegno,
> beata seta, beatissimo oro,
> ben nato lino, inclito bel lavoro
> da chi vuol la mia dea prender dissegno […] (*Rime*, 51,1-4)[58]

Canzone 50 also offers some further details of the gown. It is, for example, made of black silk:

> Non fu senza sue lode il puro e schietto
> serico habito nero,
> che, come il sol luce minor confonde,

[57] *Cortegiano*, I.XXVI-XXVIII.
[58] On this poem, see also Chapter II, 2.2.

fece ivi ogn'altro rimaner negletto. (*Rime*, 50,100-103)

Also, it is embroidered all over with an *impresa*, consisting of two intertwined grapevines. Nothing is said about the colours of the embroidery, and it is probable that it might be entirely black, since it makes the whole dress 'ombroso' (105-107: '[…] l'implicate fronde / de le due viti, d'onde / il leggiadro vestir tutto era ombroso').[59]

The theme of the black dress paradoxically generating light was already backed by a small lyric tradition. It appears (between the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries) in the work of Niccolò de' Rossi and Angelo Galli; and among poets closer to Ariosto, it is also employed by Tebaldeo:

Ché, come da le nubi che vi vanno
intorno per ombrarlo ei [= the black veil] si diffende,
così la donna mia luce e risplende
in veste che assai più tenebra fanno. (Tebaldeo, *Rime extravaganti*, 394, 5-8)

Ariosto, however, does not exploit the rhetorical potential embedded in the theme. Instead, the adjectives 'puro e schietto' again highlight moderation, a quality that, from his perspective, could outmatch extreme luxury (l. 110: 'le porpore et l'oro il nero vinse'). It should be noted that this general ideal of sobriety leads us back to Ariosto's classical vision, a famous example being Propertius' poem I 2, in which the poet protests against his beloved's excessive use of cosmetics, arguing that 'love is naked, and loves not beauty gained by artifice' (8).

This value is also at the core of the description of Alessandra to be found in the *Furioso*. In canto XLII, Rinaldo is led by a mysterious knight to admire a marble fountain, supported by eight female statues. In a sort of prophecy, the knight reveals that they are

[59] As an alternative, grapevines may suggest green.

illustrious ladies that will live at later times; among them, occupying the place between Lucrezia Borgia and Beatrice d'Este, is Alessandra Benucci (here too, her actual name is not mentioned). Her description is fairly similar to that of the canzone, and the two may easily have been written at a short distance from one another. Her outfit is once again defined as 'puro' and 'schietto'; as at l. 102 of the canzone, the effect of this absence of embellishment is likened to that of a star more luminous than all the others.

> Tra questo loco e quel de la colonna
> che fu scolpita in Borgia, com'è detto,
> formata in alabastro una gran donna
> era di tanto e sì sublime aspetto,
> che sotto puro velo, in nera gonna,
> senza oro e gemme, in un vestire schietto,
> tra le più adorne non parea men bella,
> che sia tra l'altre la ciprigna stella. (*Fur*., XXXVIII 90 A; XXXVIII 93 B; XLII 93 C)

This description is even more interesting if one tries to understand the point of view of a contemporary reader. Beatrice and Lucrezia were famous – even among their peers – for the lavishness of their clothes: in that, they could compete (and indeed did, as documents testify) only with Isabella d'Este, whose elegance was almost legendary.[60] If we return to the second section of Trissino's *I ritratti*, we find a realistic account of her outfit, which so greatly adds to her natural beauty that it prompts Macro to refer to the *topos* of *ars simia naturae*. We find another black dress described, featuring this time majestic embroideries and even solid gold buckles:

> indosso aveva una bella, e ricca robba di velluto nero, carica di alcune fibie d'oro tanto ben poste, e tanto ogni cosa, che aveva d'intorno, era mirabilmente lavorata, che pareva gli artefici, per ornar costei, aver voluto con la natura istessa contendere.[61]

[60] Luzio-Renier 1896 examine in detail the sources attesting Isabella's look, including her purchases.
[61] Trissino 1729, 273.

Rich, laden: such adjectives, which seem to precisely contrast Alessandra's dress, unadorned, without any gold or gems, could undoubtedly also be applied to the gowns of Beatrice and Lucrezia. Ariosto does not give this kind of detail – but the courtier reader could not imagine them other than that, and the overall effect of this octave must have been that of a luxurious frame out of which the central figure of Alessandra shone in all her purity. Her dress was probably made of a plain silk cloth; we may read 'schietto' as signifying the opposite of the uneven surface of the brocade (or its more expensive variety, fashionable in the early Cinquecento, the *riccio sopra riccio*).[62] As for the plain, black grapevine decoration that is described in the canzone, it would appear to be very different from the luxurious *imprese* – interwoven or embroidered in gold and silver – in which the highest ladies would compete. Finally, Alessandra did not resort to any 'artèfici' (such as those mentioned by Trissino for Isabella) but only to her own skills.

The black of Alessandra's gown (which appears in both descriptions) also deserves attention, since literary echoes might have played a role in Ariosto's choice of colour. In particular, an important text here would seem to be Ovid's *Ars amatoria*, which was highly influential throughout the early Renaissance, and was also explicitly paraphrased in works by Calmeta, Equicola, and Castiglione.[63] The third book, as is known, offers advice to women in the art of seduction, engaging in a discussion on hairstyles, clothes, and cosmetics. When it comes to dress, dark hues are explicitly prescribed by Ovid for women with pale skin ('Pulla decent niveas', 189). It is not just this passage, however, but the whole of Ovid's argument that can be regarded as a source for Ariosto. Indeed, its starting point is that as most women have not received from the gods the gift of perfect

[62] Luzio-Renier 1896, 16.
[63] See Kolsky 1991, 268-269.

beauty, they must resort to stratagems to enhance their look – but must, however (as in Propertius's discourse), avoid excessive luxury.[64]

Other texts from Ariosto's time should also be taken into consideration: in this case, I am not suggesting that Ariosto actually drew from them, but rather that there exist general similarities in the way they relate to the classical source. Castiglione's *Cortegiano*, whose fundamental concept of *sprezzatura*[65] was in turn probably influenced by Ovid (*sprezzatura*, in this specific case, implied that the lady should give what aid she could to her own natural attractiveness, but avoid showing affectation),[66] does not give any indication on colours for women's dresses. He does, however, recommend black for the male courtier's everyday clothing[67] (whereas bright colours are allowed for festive occasions). A similar point is made by Equicola in his *Libro de natura de amore*; that is to say, he quotes Ovid's passage about colour choices for women, and extends its validity to men,[68] but does so within an erudite dissertation on the symbolic meaning of colours.[69]

[64] *Ars amatoria*, III 103-106: 'Forma dei munus: forma quota quaeque superbit? / Pars vestrum tali munere magna caret. / Cura dabit faciem; facies neglecta peribit, / Idaliae similis sit licet illa deae'; 169-172: 'Quid de veste loquar? Nec vos, segmenta, requiro / nec te, quae Tyrio murica, lana, rubes. / Cum tot prodierint pretio leviore colores, / quis furor est census corpore ferre suos!'.

[65] *Cortegiano*, I.XXVI-XXVIII.

[66] Ibid., III.VIII: '[…] deve questa donna aver iudicio di conoscer quai sono quegli abiti che le accrescon grazia […] ma dissimulatamente più che sia possibile; e […] mostrar sempre di non mettervi studio o diligenzia alcuna'.

[67] Ibid., II.XXVII: 'però parmi che maggior grazia abbia nei vestimenti il color nero, che alcun altro; e se pur non è nero, che almen tenda al scuro'. The passage was already in the second (out of three) version: Ghinassi 1968, 111. This is not the right place to discuss Ariosto's knowledge of the *Cortegiano*. As is known, the elaboration of the dialogue took about twenty years, starting from ca. 1508: see, at least, Ghinassi 1967; Floriani 1976; Quondam 2000; Motta 2003. As claimed by Cabani 2000 [2016], 142-143, Ariosto probably could read it only after 1516; consequently, only the second and third versions of the *Furioso* could have been influenced by it. In this light, any resemblance between Ariosto's lyrics and the *Cortegiano* either suggests a post-1516 composition of the former or (more cautiously) is to be ascribed to a common cultural framework.

[68] *Libro de natura de amore*, *Libro quinto*, IV: 'Ovidio nel terzo libro della Arte amatoria, dando precepti alle domne de qual colore debiano vestire, dice alle fusce convenire il bianco, alle bianche il pullo, […]'. I am quoting not from the 1525 *editio princeps*, but rather from the first known version of the work, probably dating back to 1505-1508, between the author's stays in Ferrara and in Mantua (Equicola 1999).

[69] Deciphering the meaning of colours was a popular entertainment in early Cinquecento courts, which also featured in literature. A famous example is a sonnet long attributed to Aquilano, but in fact written by Correggio: *Sì come il verde importa speme e amore* (*Rime*, 299). In this context, however, black was always interpreted as a sign of sadness/melancholy, and as such was worn by unrequited lovers in the poems belonging to this tradition. Ariosto himself features this motif in the *Furioso* when Orlando fears for Angelica's life (*Fur.*, VIII 85,5-6 ABC: 'Ma portar vòlse un ornamento nero, / e forse acciò ch'al suo dolor

Equicola's concern is that men might appear effeminate if they dress too elegantly: therefore, he prescribes that they should 'in nesciuna parte imitare femine' but that their outfit should be 'puro, necto et elegante' (*Libro quinto*). Simplicity thus appears as a typically manly feature. For Equicola, moreover, clothes must reflect one's social status, as well as one's interiority, i.e. intellect and behaviour (again from *Libro quinto*: 'Non exceda nostra conditione nostro habito; al'exteriore lo interiore responda; sia nel nostro vestire concento, l'uno habito al'altro responda').

Read against this background, Ariosto's passages on Alessandra's dress appear to be something more than an imitative description of an elegant woman of middling rank, but also something more than simply the reflection of an ideal of moderation. Ariosto, as is only to be expected, would have made an effort to extol Alessandra while not unduly exalting her real social status; and highlighting her moderation was a particularly suitable strategy to this end. But most intriguingly, in these passages Alessandra is linked to a particular look in which a set of traditionally 'manly' traits are embedded. Such textual tailoring suggests that her most outstanding features are not to be sought in her external appearance, but in her interiority: we shall dwell further on this subject in the following section.

3. The intellectual canon

Before focusing on the treatment of the intellectual features in Ariosto's women, it may be useful to provide a historical framework for this aspect. To retrace the history of the verbal depiction of women in terms of their non-physical qualities is indeed a hard task. This type of characterization seems to be more relevant in the classic than in the vernacular tradition (physical description, on the other hand, is in the classics generally

simigli'). An examination of lyric and theoretical sources related to colours, which takes the *Furioso* as a starting point but also includes later texts, is in Salza 1914, 141-218; Luzzatto-Pompas 1997.

less sophisticated);[70] this may be seen, for instance, in Propertius' poems II 1 and II 3, which capture the woman in the act of dancing, singing, and composing poetry (I will quote from II 3 further on; for II 1, see above). In early Italian lyric poetry these attributes were rarely highlighted; and when they were, were always subordinated to physical beauty. The scope of the present study does not permit an overview of this history, but it should be pointed out that medieval lyric representations of women only include attributes related to their modesty and nobility of soul, with the predominance of the words 'onestade', 'gentilezza', 'umiltade', 'pudicizia'.[71] As a reflex of this, her actions, i.e. the immediate manifestations of the *animo*, are strictly limited and tend to fall into the category of beautiful gestures or movements: glancing, smiling, speaking gently and wisely, walking with a graceful poise. All of these elements are frequently observable in Petrarch and Boccaccio, and prompt, respectively, the representation of Laura as a spiritualized creature and the harmonious ideal of the *locus amoenus* inhabited by nymphs.

Between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as I mentioned in the Preamble, other features related to 'inner beauty' are gradually integrated into literary descriptions of women, in the context of an increasing interest in female nature. This interest led to the composition of a number of proto-feminist treatises both in Latin and in the vernacular, especially following the models of Petrarch's *Triumphi* and Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus* (the latter was translated for the first time into Italian in 1506), which recalled examples of illustrious female figures of the past. In these, many authors undertook to argue for the dignity of woman and to articulate positive views of women's nature, and women's place.[72] The background for this growing trend for writing on the *questione*

[70] See Muñiz Muñiz 2018, 53.
[71] On this point, see Sanson 2003, 209-210.
[72] See Kolsky 2005, and its bibliography; Capra 1988, 5-57.

femminile is multifaceted: at least two facts should be mentioned, i.e. the increasing literacy of women at the turn of the century (a fact that opens up to the spread of female poetry writing in the following decades),[73] and the development of courts, where with growing frequency power was allocated to women. In her role as patron, the court lady would encourage the production of writings in the defence of women, as a means to legitimize her position. The Mantua-Ferrara nexus, with the key figures of Eleonora d'Aragona and Isabella d'Este, played a major role in this process.[74]

3.1. Some examples from Ariosto's times

Again, it is heuristically useful to consider how the theme is treated in Trissino's *I ritratti*, in Equicola's *De mulieribus*, and in Castiglione's *Cortegiano* – in particular, in the latter's third book the characters fashion an ideal *donna di palazzo*, engaging in a debate on woman's place in society that in the words of Stephen Kolsky can be regarded as 'a critical *summa* of the discourse on women in Renaissance Italy'.[75] The model of 'court lady' that emerges from this tradition is endowed with characteristics that (leaving aside those related to political virtues and skills in rulership, which should be the subject of a wider discussion) may either highlight her social behaviour, or her culture – but these two types often intermingle, as happen in Trissino's work.

A rich and complex illustration of woman's sociability is offered by Giuliano de' Medici in the *Cortegiano*.[76] Giuliano asserts that the *donna di palazzo* has to be graceful

[73] The most relevant studies on this subject are quoted in Vecchi Galli, 2006, 191-192; see also Dionisotti 1967, 238; Sberlati 1997; Zancan 1983, 8-9; Zancan 1998; Cox 2008.
[74] Kolsky 2005, 10-16; see also the essays gathered in Panizza 2000, and Chemello 1980.
[75] Kolsky 2005, 11. Note that the discussion on women constituted the original nucleus of Castiglione's work, the *Lettera al Frisia in difesa delle donne*; on the phases of elaboration of the female theme see, besides the works cited at footnote 67, Romagnoli 2009.
[76] On the one hand, Castiglione seeks to prescribe homogeneous rules of behaviour for men and women who entertain social relationship at court; on the other hand, he keeps them distinct on some points, prescribing (much as Equicola does), that their roles should complement one another. See Zancan 1983*bis*, 44-45.

in her deportment, witty and entertaining in her conversation (but never in a dissolute way), and insightful as regards the personality of her interlocutors. While culture also features as a fundamental element in this kind of portrait (and Francesco Sberlati highlights the absolute novelty of this),[77] it appears, however, both subordinate to and in the service of social expression:

> […] a quella che vive in corte parmi convenirsi sopra ogni altra cosa una certa affabilità piacevole, per la quale sappia gentilmente intertenere ogni sorte d'omo con ragionamenti grati ed onesti, ed accommodati al tempo e loco ed alla qualità di quella persona con cui parlerà, accompagnando coi costumi placidi e modesti e con quella onestà che sempre ha da componer tutte le sue azioni una pronta vivacità d'ingegno, […] Non deve adunque questa donna, per volersi far estimar bona ed onesta, esser tanto ritrosa e mostrar tanto d'aborrire e le compagnie e i ragionamenti ancor un poco lascivi, che ritrovandovisi se ne levi; […] (*Cortegiano*, III.V)

Similarly, Equicola's *De mulieribus* gives a description of Cornelia Cantelmo that is characterized, according to Kolsky, solely 'in terms of her social graces':[78]

> Cuius ut taceam suavissimae vocis leporem et formosissimi vultus decentiam quam mira gestuum dignitas convenustat. Sermo nunquam inanis, grata semper urbanitas, temperata severitas, maximum in verbis pondus et sine superstitione religio, cui non sunt admirationi? (*De mulieribus*, f. b3*r*)[79]

[77] Sberlati 1997, 122.
[78] Kolsky 1991, 76.
[79] Quoted ibid., 76.

In lyric poetry, this model of sociability emerges, for instance, from the poems by Correggio and Boiardo that I have illustrated at 2.1. To these we may add another poem by Correggio, capitolo 376, also celebrating (as the one seen before) Lucrezia Borgia. After describing her physical beauty according to the *canone lungo*, the poet gives (85-117) a long and detailed account of Lucrezia's social conduct, which touches on her dancing (one of her favourite entertainments, as is known), her skill in dressing her hair, and in games, alongside the more traditional 'parlar modesti' (93) and 'pudicizia' (97).

As for the 'erudite' type, Trissino offers a crucial example. In *I ritratti* the speaker, Bembo, highlights Isabella d'Este's literary and philosophic culture and carefully distinguishes it from all her other virtues (i.e. political skills, sociability itself, and moral values) that precede it in the text.

> Adunque tutti i beni di Castalia, e di Parnaso facciamola avere, […] e di tutte quelle cose, che i Poeti ornano in versi, gl'Istorici scrivono in prosa, et i Filosofi ne l'uno, e ne l'altro ammoniscono; di queste adorno il nostro ritratto si truova […] e sopra il tutto di Poetica si diletta, e molto in quella si dimora; […].[80]

Bembo himself, throughout his oeuvre, carefully highlights the inner qualities of women, almost to the point of equating their importance to their physical features. In his famous sonnet 5 – *Crin d'oro crespo et d'ambra tersa et pura* – he exalts the precocious wisdom of Lucrezia Borgia,[81] while Elisabetta Quirini is defined 'Donna, cui nulla è par bella né saggia' in the opening line of sonnet 150. There is only one case in which Bembo's praise openly addresses accomplished poetic skills: this is a 1504 poem

[80] Trissino 1729, 274-275. Actually, culture is an attribute that belongs to the 'official' representation of Isabella d'Este, and is also features in Ariosto's praise included in the *Furioso*. See *Fur*., XI 59,1-2 AB; XIII 59,1-2 C: '[…] quella / d'opere illustri e di bei studii amica'.

[81] *Le rime*, 5,10: 'senno maturo et la più verde etade'. This concept is borrowed by Tebaldeo at l. 9 ('senno maturo in non matura etate') of his sonnet *Dui vivi soli, or fino, hebeno raro* (see above).

addressed to Veronica Gambara, in which the poet expresses his hopes to meet her personally soon. This constitutes, nevertheless, a well-motivated exception, as Veronica was a precocious talent (she was nineteen at the time), and is still regarded as the foremother of the women poets of the sixteenth century.

> di quella chiara fronte che m'invola
> già pur pensando, e 'n parte è 'l mio sostegno,
> di quel bel ragionar pien d'alto ingegno
> vedrò mai raggio, udirò mai parola? (*Le rime*, 69,5-8)

The syntagm 'alto ingegno', here highlighted by the rhyme position, returns in Sonnet 151, where Bembo strives to properly describe Elisabetta Quirini's 'beltà sí ricca e 'ngegno sí sublime' (11), and in sonnet 76.[82] In the latter, it occurs within a more general celebration of *la Morosina*, mainly structured in terms of her inner qualities (only in the first tercet a brief mention of her outward appearance is added).[83] Alongside her erudition, the sonnet also mentions the traditional virtues ('pudico' and 'honeste'), as well as eloquence and sociability:

> Poi che 'l vostr'alto ingegno et quel celeste
> ragionar et tacer pudico et saggio
> da far cortese un huom fero et selvaggio,
> e i leggiadri atti et l'accoglienze honeste
> vi rendon tanto spatio […] (*Le rime*, 76,1-5)

In the dedicatory epistle of the *Asolani* (1505), Lucrezia Borgia is depicted as an aspiring erudite, and the poet himself as her guide, who always encourages her to cultivate her education, putting it before any care she may bestow on her outward appearance:

> Il che farete voi per aventura volentieri, sì
> come quella che, vie più vaga di ornare

[82] According to the editor Donnini, Bembo wrote it close to the first edition of the *Rime* (1530).
[83] *Le rime*, 76,9-11: 'se vi s'arroge il corpo, in cui beltade / poser, quanta pon dar, benigne stelle, / con quali rime assai potrò lodarvi?'.

> l'animo delle belle virtù che di care vestimenta il corpo, quanto più tempo per voi si può ponete sempre o leggendo alcuna cosa o scrivendo, forse acciò che di quanto con le bellezze del corpo quelle dell'altre donne soprastate, di tanto con queste dell'animo sormontiate le vostre, […].[84]

Bembo had also taken on the same role of lover/mentor with Maria Savorgnan at the time of their relationship (1500-1501). Their correspondence testifies to a deep bond that was both emotional and intellectual. They frequently exchanged Petrarchan poems, with Bembo correcting Maria's works but all the time savouring the equality in their relationship: the phrase *di pari,* which regularly appears in their letters, is chosen as their motto.[85]

In the previous tradition, the word *ingegno* would usually have been associated to the intellect of the writer, which, following an established *topos*, would be inadequate to celebrate the lady's beauty (hence the use of syntagms such as 'basso ingegno' – see, for example, Petrarch, *Tr. Pud*., 66). Bembo modifies this scheme, measuring his intellectual failure on another intellect, that of the woman herself (see the aforementioned poem *Le rime*, 76, 6-7: 'ch'io non haggio / stile').[86] This new theme, i.e. the comparison (implicit or not) between the two lovers on the intellectual level, is adopted regardless of the actual erudition of the woman who is celebrated: if this corresponded to reality in the case of Veronica Gambara, whose intellectual achievement was truly great, it did not necessarily apply to Lucrezia Borgia, whose learning was definitely not outstanding. This may be a sign that Bembo was pursuing an ideal rather than a faithful description of reality.

[84] Quoted in Dilemmi 2006, 35.
[85] See the recent edition Savorgnan 2012, 12-14.
[86] This is not absolutely unprecedented; see Poliziano, *Rispetti*, XXIX 6: 'piena di grazia, piena d'alto ingegno'.

Alternatively, we may suppose that *ingegno,* in these cases, might stand for not pure knowledge, but rather for a combination of social skills. Such uncertainty in the definition of this word characterizes much literary praise of women: for example, Castiglione's description of Emilia Pia (*Cortegiano,* I.IV: 'per esser dotata di così vivo ingegno e giudicio, come sapete, pareva la maestra di tutti'), or those in Equicola's *De mulieribus* (1508),[87] which celebrate Isabella d'Este and two ladies of her entourage, Margherita and Cornelia Cantelmo.

If we now return to Lucrezia Borgia, it is interesting to note that Ariosto himself, in the aforementioned eclogue – as he recalls the wedding of Lucrezia and Alfonso – makes a point of stating that the beauty of her *ingegno* is even superior to her physical beauty:

> Tutti la singular grazia del volto,
> le liggiadre fattezze, il bel simbiante
> e quel celeste andar laudavan molto.
> Ma chi noticia avea di lei più inante,
> estollea più l'angelica beltade
> de l'altissimo ingegno e l'opre sante. (*Rime,* eclogue I ed. Fatini, 262-267)[88]

This convergence between Ariosto and Bembo may be taken as a confirmation of Lucrezia's desire for her intellectual qualities to be extolled; but most importantly, it reveals that Ariosto was himself keen to explore this theme. This point will be the subject of the next section.

3.2. Female *ingegno* in Ariosto's lyrics

The fact that Ariosto, too, privileges intellect over beauty is evident from the frequent use of the word *ingegno,* in reference to his beloved, throughout his lyrics and in the

[87] Kolsky 2005, 156-158.

[88] In the following lines, Ariosto also praises traditional womanly virtues: 'inclita onestade […] grande animo […] femenil contegno […] virtù' (268-277). Note that 'celeste andar' at l. 264 may recall Poliziano's description of Simonetta in *Stanze per la giostra*, I 56,7: 'fra sé lodando il dolce andar celeste'.

Furioso. If in the opening of the above-mentioned sonnet 51, the 'beato ingegno' suggests a practical skill (that of designing and sewing a gown), in other cases it seems to be adopted with the meaning of 'knowledge', as it is in Bembo.

In sonnet XIII (*Altri lodan il viso, altri le chiome*),[89] the poet declares his intention of overlooking the praise of the short-lasting physical features, and proposes an alternative catalogue of qualities which regard exclusively her *animo*:

> Altri lodan il viso, altri le chiome
> de la sua Donna, altri l'avorio bianco
> di che formò natura il petto e il fianco;
> altri dan a' begl'occhi eterno nome.
> Me non mortal fragil bellezza, come
> un ingegno divino ha mosso unquanco,
> un animo così libero et franco
> come non senta le corporee some,
> una chiara eloquentia che deriva
> da un fonte di saper, una honestade
> di cortese atto et leggiadria non schiva. (*Rime*, XIII 1-11)

The list includes intelligence, frankness, a property of speech that derives from knowledge – which is particularly outstanding since, as pointed out by Helena Sanson, *eloquenza* is rarely classified as a womanly attribute –;[90] finally, the traditional 'onestade' and 'cortese atto' together with the 'leggiadria non schiva'. The latter is a particularly important point, and it should be noted that Castiglione, too, prescribes that the *donna di palazzo* should avoid being bashful (*Cortegiano*, III.V; see above).

Ariosto is therefore somehow in line with his contemporaries' outlook; but, intriguingly, in this case too, he makes a point of linking this perspective with its classical

[89] The date of composition is unknown, but given the presence of multiple versions (Finazzi 2002-2003, 218) it could have originally written by Ariosto as a young poet. On this poem, see also Chapter II, 3.4.
[90] Sanson 2003, 212-224 (see also below, 4.2). There are, of course, some exceptions, even if we limit the investigation to fifteenth and early-sixteenth century works. For instance, in a canzone by Angelo Galli in praise of one Francesca (218, *Parlamo a ragione* – for which, see Bartolomeo 2012, 48-49), among the lady's attributes we find: 'magnanima, gentil, saggia, eloquente' (37). See also Bernardo Pulci, *Poesie*, CIII 18: 'ogni eloquenzia a lei concessa avea' (the poem commemorates Simonetta Vespucci).

background. The sonnet opens with what is clearly a *priamel*, reminiscent of Horace (*Od.*, I 7,1: 'Laudabunt alii […]') and also harks back to Propertius, II 3,[91] which is similarly structured around the idea of indifference towards physical beauty (identified by the same attributes we find in the modern canon) and preference for a cultural view that includes dance, song and poetic composition:

> nec me tam facies, quamvis sit candida, cepit
> (lilia non domina sunt magis alba mea),
> nec de more comae per levia colla fluentes,
> non oculi, geminae, sidera nostra, faces, […]
> quantum quod posito formose saltat Iaccho,
> egit ut euhantis dux Ariadna choros,
> et quantum, Aeolio cum temptat carmina plectro,
> par Aganippeae ludere docta lyrae,
> et sua cum antiquae committit scripta Corinnae
> carminaque Erinnae non putat aequa suis. (Propertius, II 3,9-22)

Another example of this perspective is sonnet XXXVI, in which the speaker is uncertain whether to regard as more excellent the beauty or the 'chiaro ingegno' of the woman, and concludes by declaring the contest essentially a draw:

> pensai che magior fosse la bellezza
> di quanti pregi il ciel, Donna, in voi pose, […]
> Ma poi con sì gran prova il chiaro ingegno
> mi si mostrò, che rimanere in forse
> mi fe' che suo non fusse il primo loco.
> Che sia maggior non so, so ben che poco
> son disuguali, et so che a questo segno
> altro ingegno o belezza unqua non sorse. (*Rime*, XXXVI 5-14)

Ariosto also juxtaposes the praises of the lady, including her intellect, with frequent laments of his own inadequacy. In the opening of canzone 50 we find an implicit reflection on the respective merits of poetry and prose, the latter being preferable to convey extraordinary concepts. The poet, however, is not sure he will succeed ('Non so

[91] These echoes were noticed by Floriani 1988*bis*, 256-257.

s'io potrò ben chiudere in rima / quel che in parole sciolte / fatica havrei di ricontarvi a pieno', 1-3).[92] Later he insists again on how difficult his chosen enterprise of celebrating Alessandra has turned out to be ('Senza fine io lavoro, / se quanto havrei da dir vuo' por in carte', 117-118). In sonnet XIII, after listing Alessandra's skills, he regrets – with a veiled allusion to the myth of Pygmalion, whose archetype may be found in the *Fragmenta*[93] – not being able to immortalize her by making a living statue ('viva / statua', 13-14). In this way the tradition of *ut pictura poësis* is refashioned: here, words and images compete in the difficult task of trying to represent the *animo*, something that would truly occur only if the image could speak.

The idea of a living image of Alessandra is in fact put into effect in Ariosto's poetic works. It is found in the *ekphrasis* on the fountain in the *Furioso*. Here, her marble statue is endowed with a special expressiveness, and indeed looks on the figure kneeling before her (the poet) with a reproachful attitude, as if she, who is blessed with intellectual virtues (in addition to beauty and grace), disdained the poet's 'rozzo ingegno':

> Non si potea, ben contemplando fiso,
> conoscer se più grazia o più beltade,
> o maggior maestà fosse nel viso,
> o più indizio d'ingegno o d'onestade. […][94]
>
> Dolce quantunque e pien di grazia tanto
> fosse il suo bello e ben formato segno,
> parea sdegnarsi che con umil canto
> ardisse lei lodar sì rozzo ingegno. (*Fur*., XXXVIII 91-92 A; XXXVIII 94-95 B; XLII 94-95 C)

[92] See *Inf*., XXVIII 1-2: 'Chi poria mai pur con parole sciolte / dicer […]?'.
[93] *Rvf*, LXXVIII 9-14: 'Ma poi ch'i' vengo a ragionar co ·llei, / benignamente assai par che m'ascolte, / se risponder savesse a' detti miei. // Pigmalïon, quanto lodar ti dêi / de l'imagine tua, se mille volte / n'avesti quel ch'i sol una vorrei'. This is one of the two famous sonnets on Laura's portrait by Simone Martini, which are considered the forebears of lyric poetry on portraits (see Pich 2010, 52-56).
[94] The scheme of this praise resembles the excerpt about Isabella d'Este (see above) in *Fur*., XI 59,3-5 AB; XIII 59,3-5 C: 'ch'io non so ben se più leggiadra e bella / mi debba dire, o più saggia e pudica, / liberale e magnanima Isabella'.

The *Furioso* notoriously pushes the *topos modestiae* of the poet/narrator to the highest degree of irony. From the very beginning, Ariosto compares himself to his characters, who have gone mad for love, and hopes that his own insanity 'che 'l poco ingegno ad or ad or mi lima' (*Fur*., I 2,6 ABC) will not prevent him from concluding the work. This motif is also at the core of the *ekphrasis* of the fountain: here Ariosto goes one step further and juxtaposes his intellectual inadequacy to Alessandra's intellect, thus representing himself as inferior to her (something that Bembo never did).

In such cases, what specific meaning should be assigned to the word *ingegno*? It is hard to imagine that Ariosto might be referring to Alessandra's erudition. Although little is known of her biography, nothing supports the hypothesis that she might have been a woman of letters; and Catalano, judging from her epistolary correspondence, even speaks of 'deficienza di cultura'.[95] As in the case of Bembo, two solutions are possible: either Ariosto painted an idealized portrait of her as an erudite, or the description aims to reflect reality; in the latter case the poet wishes to praise a combination of qualities through which Alessandra distinguishes herself in her environment and in social relations. An amalgam of the two solutions is also possible and is perhaps the most plausible answer to our question. However, the picture of Alessandra that emerges from canzone 50 is, as we have seen so far, that of the typical *donna di palazzo*, whose most important skill is the ability to engage in relationships. It is important to point out that Alessandra Benucci was neither a noblewoman by birth, nor did she live at court (even if she had frequented the court of Diana d'Este): for Ariosto, therefore, the validity of this type of female portrait extended beyond the courtly context for which it had originally been intended, and became a universal model.

[95] Catalano 1930-1931, I, 424-425.

4. Female wisdom and social behaviour

All of Ariosto's female portrayals are unusual both on account of his innovations to the catalogue of physical beauty, and for his introduction of an intellectual canon, which in turn consists of a combination of personal culture and social intelligence. That Ariosto privileges the latter type of canon is also evident from two capitoli, XXVII and XXVIII, which are entirely given over to a female speaker (it is unclear whether she is the same in both) who, in both cases, offers a lesson in wisdom, wit and correct social behaviour. These aspects also partly emerge from canzone 50, to which I shall devote a little more attention before coming to my analysis of these capitoli.

4.1. A mysterious *impresa* in canzone 50

Let us now examine two details of Alessandra's outfit again. The first is the laurel-leaf crown ('gemmato alloro', 113). Laurel is a well-known symbol of poetry and intellectual work in general: it is possible that Alessandra, too, may have cared about fashioning herself according to this ideal. The second detail is the *impresa* embroidered in her dress, consisting, as mentioned above, in a pattern of two intertwined grapevines. It is precisely this motif which triggers Ariosto's declaration of inadequacy, as he explains that the meaning of this design escapes him, and implores the woman to decipher it for him:

> Deh, se lece il pensiero
> vostro spiar, de l'implicate fronde
> de le due viti, donde
> il leggiadro vestir tutto era ombroso,
> ditemi il senso ascoso. (*Rime*, 50,104-108)

> Senza misterio non fu già trapunto
> il drappo nero, […] (Ibid., 111-112)

In the *Furioso*, the grapevine is present as a symbol in the description of the love grotto of Angelica and Medoro: 'Aveano in su l'entrata il luogo adorno / coi piedi storti edere e

viti erranti' (*Fur*., XXI 106,1-2 AB; XXIII 106,1-2 C). It is paired with a similar image, namely, the ivy, which recurs also elsewhere in the poem as a term of comparison for the sexual act (see for instance *Fur*., VII 29,1-4 ABC: 'Non così strettamente edera preme / pianta ove intorno abbarbicata s'abbia, / come si stringon li dui amanti insieme, / cogliendo de lo spirto in su le labbia'; or *Fur*., XXVI 34,6 AB; XXVIII 34,6 C: 'ch'un nano *aviticchiato* era con quella').[96] It is unlikely that the meaning of the *impresa* should be the same in the canzone, as it would be a mark of immodesty to parade such a symbol on a dress. But its meaning is undoubtedly related to mutual love; it is likely that it should here represent fidelity, following a tradition whose roots should be sought in classical literature. One may for example recall a similar use of both images, grapevine and ivy, in Catullus's epithalamion for the nuptials of Manlius Torquatus and Vinia Aurunculeia (LXI):

> mentem amore revinciens,
> ut tenax hedera huc et huc
> arborem implicat errans. (Catullus, *Carm.*, LXI 33-35)
>
> lenta sed velut adsitas
> vitis implicat arbores,
> implicabitur in tuum
> complexum […] (Ibid., 102-105)

The image of the ivy is also associated with a vow of fidelity in Horace's fifteenth epode:

> in verba iurabas mea,
> artius atque hedera procera adstringitur ilex,
> lentis adhaerens bracchiis,
> […]
> fore hunc amorem mutuum. (Horace, *Epodes*, XV 4-10)

[96] Both these examples make use of verbs already employed by Dante, in the context of a simile also adopting the ivy image (*Inf*., XXV 58-60: 'Ellera abbarbicata mai non fue / ad alber sì, come l'orribil fiera / per l'altrui membra avviticchiò le sue').

Finally, it should be noted that Ariosto also deploys this metaphor in relation to the Alfonso-Lucrezia couple in eclogue I, when he writes: 'come ben confan le viti e gli olmi, / confanno i dui consorti' (289-290).

Although this meaning lies within the grasp of any careful reader of the canzone, in the poetic fiction it is described as 'mysterious'. It is the woman who devised (and probably embroidered) the symbol; in doing so she fashions herself as an enigma, implicitly inviting a solution from those who are watching her. Not only were *imprese* very dear to Ariosto, who employs this device numerous times in his *Furioso*:[97] they were also extremely popular in courts, and often took on the character of an actual game, involving intelligence and intuition (as I anticipated in Chapter I, 3.2, regarding Ippolito d'Este's passion for them). People belonging to a court liked to be portrayed with their favourite emblems, as can be seen in Raphael's portrait of Elisabetta Gonzaga, whose forehead is decorated by a mysterious jewel in the shape of a scorpion. Another ornament belonging to the duchess of Urbino, an 'S'-shaped brooch, prompts a discussion between the interlocutors of Castiglione's *Cortegiano* and the improvisation of a sonnet by Bernardo Accolti (I.IX).[98] In fact, Castiglione regards the *impresa* as a symbol of intelligence, and explicitly prescribes it to the courtier as a way of attracting attention.[99] It is also interesting to recall the letter (already mentioned in Chapter I, 3.2) in which Equicola promises to Ippolito d'Este that he will refrain from trying to interpret his *imprese*: this promise must be viewed as an example of court rhetoric, in which the superiority of the interlocutor may be glimpsed; nevertheless, it also testifies to the fact that 'enigmaticity' was a fundamental characteristic of the *imprese*.

[97] A complete list of treatises on the *imprese*, before and after Ariosto's death, is in Salza 1914, 140-208.
[98] See Bolzoni 2010, 200-208.
[99] *Cortegiano*, II.VIII: 'porrà cura d'aver […] abiti ben intesi, motti appropriati, invenzioni ingeniose, che a sé tirino gli occhi de' circonstanti, come calamita il ferro'.

Also with respect to this, Alessandra can qualify as a worthy follower of the model of the *donna di palazzo*; and it is interesting to note that garments, in this view, constitute the meeting point of inner and outer beauty, and are therefore a fundamental element in social, and intellectual, characterization.

4.2. Silence and Humanistic wisdom in capitolo XXVII

Clothing and *imprese* exhibit the same function as threshold between the public and the private in capitolo XXVII (*De la mia negra penna in fregio d'oro*). In this poem, a female speaker refuses to reveal the meaning of the symbol embroidered in her dress, a black and golden pen:

> De la mia negra penna in fregio d'oro
> molti mi sono a dimandar molesti
> l'occulto senso, et io nol vuo' dir loro.
> Vuo' che sempre nel cor chiuso mi resti,
> né per pregare o stimular d'altrui
> già mai mi potrò indur ch'io 'l manifesti. (*Rime*, XXVII 1-6)

It is likely in my opinion that Ariosto wrote this poem specifically for a lady's *impresa*. The probability that it may have originally been an 'occasional' poem[100] makes it very similar to capitolo XXV, the poem on Ippolito d'Este's camel *impresa* (see Chapter I, 3.2): moreover, the two poems resemble each other closely in terms of length (XXV consists of 43 lines, XXVII of 46) and of structure. The latter is strictly non-narrative: both poems 'embroider on' a single image, without truly developing it; XXVII even adopts a circular structure as its last verse is almost identical to its first. One may suppose that, as with capitoli XXI-XXII and the two canzoni commemorating Giuliano de' Medici

[100] The poem features not only in the main tradition, but also in **L3** (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Ashburnham 564), a manuscript anthology from the first half of the sixteenth century, which contains a very large number of lyrics by Ariosto, as well as two of his *Satire* in their earlier version (Finazzi 2002-2003, 92-93).

(see Chapter IV), in this case also, Ariosto thought of them as a diptych; [101] one may even go as far as hypothesizing that, while XXV was written for Ippolito, XXVII may have been dedicated to one of the cardinal's *favorite* (perhaps Dalida de' Putti, a musician much appreciated at the Este court, who gave Ippolito two sons). It should furthermore be pointed out that the female speaker's attitude exactly mirrors that of Ippolito, as recorded in Equicola's testimony (see Chapter I, 3.2), displaying on the one hand great pride in the *impresa*, and on the other an almost contradictory stance of opposition against the courtly game of interpretation. This double-edged will on the part of the 'clients' of both poems is respected and in a way echoed by the poet himself, who offers a detailed description of the two *imprese* but avoids entering into any form of interpretation.

Given the lack of evidence, the speaker of XXVII cannot be identified as the cardinal's lover with any degree of certainty; however, while this must remain just a hypothesis, it is just as valid as the more commonly-held assumption that the female voice is in fact that of Alessandra Benucci.

This poem is significant not only in that it further testifies to Ariosto's attention for the contemporary fashion of *imprese*, but especially because it shows his interest in a theme that was equally important in contemporary literature and society, i.e. the correct use of silence, of which this poem constitutes an endorsement: throughout it, the female speaker playfully threatens her audience with mythological examples of excessive curiosity (which will be seen shortly).

The reflection on the necessity of silence, and its association with prudence, was crucial in the sixteenth century (becoming especially developed in the second half), and lent itself to various kinds of elaborations; this trend proved particularly central in courtly

[101] The parallel is, however, imperfect: in XXV it is the camel depicted in the *impresa* that talks; here the speaker is the woman whose emblem is the pen.

contexts, where it inevitably became intertwined and compromised with the ambiguous art of simulation and dissimulation.[102] The Humanistic formulations of this topic usually hark back to an age-long tradition, intermingling popular proverbs, Biblical wisdom, and stimuli from ancient philosophy (e.g. Plutarch, Cicero, and Seneca).[103]

Among many possible examples Ariosto might have consulted (including Erasmus's *Adagia*),[104] a fundamental text in this respect is Calcagnini's *Descriptio silentii*.[105] A detailed *ekphrasis* is developed in this pamphlet on the Egyptian god of silence Harpocrates, following a taste for allegory that complies with the Lucianic tradition: the god, allegedly encountered by the protagonist in the Temple of Fortune in Preneste, is accompanied by Prudence and Faithfulness, and each attribute belonging to these gods is illustrated and explained with great display of erudition. As mentioned in the Introduction, this pamphlet probably influenced Ariosto's personification of Silence in *Fur*., XII 78-97 AB; XIV C. This was noted especially by Rinaldi, who included this point in his overview of the Humanistic theme of silence in Ariosto, where he also touches on capitolo XXVII,[106] highlighting how it may betray mysteriosophic interests on the part of the poet (in passages such as 'Ciò ch'altri asconder vol, spiar non lice', 28). What is relevant here is that the scholar interprets the pen *impresa* as a symbol for silence itself, his belief being that Ariosto sought to set up a paradoxal dynamic: the more the female speaker refuses to explain the meaning, the more she is in fact revealing it. To bolster this interpretation, Rinaldi recalls the traditional association between silence and black.[107]

[102] On dissimulation in early modern court culture, see Snyder 2009, which considers many documents including the *Cortegiano*. Specifically on silence, see Burke 1993; Patrizi 1998; Bisello 2003. Several inputs are also found in Nigro's introduction to Calcagnini 1990.
[103] Rinaldi 2000, 337-338.
[104] For example, *Adagia*, 2403. *Silentium tutum praemium*.
[105] Calcagnini 1544, 490-494; an Italian translation is in Calcagnini 1990, 31-50.
[106] Rinaldi 2000, 339-351; see also Prandi 2006. On the role of silence in the narrative development of the *Furioso*, see also Genovese 2012.
[107] Rinaldi 2000, 347-349. It is no coincidence that Ariosto's Silence wears a 'mantel bruno' (*Fur*., XII 94,6 AB; XIV C).

I think this interpretation is plausible, except for the fact that it overlooks an important detail, namely, that the black pen is framed in a 'fregio d'oro'. Indeed, the contrast between gold and black determines the ambiguity of the *impresa*, which can stand equally well for happiness or for sadness – as the speaker herself says, significantly, at the exact midpoint of the capitolo ('e non vuo' dir se mostra / l'anima lieta o di dolor compunta', 17-18). I believe it possible that precisely this ambiguity, and the tension thus created between opposites, could be the ultimate meaning of the *impresa*. If this were true, Ariosto would here be adopting the technique of the *serio ludere*, the outcome of which is to mock the excessive effort for interpretation on the part of curious onlookers. Indeed, I think that the specific target of the poem could be Humanistic exegesis (also practiced by Calcagnini, and displayed in his *Descriptio silentii*):

> quilli che 'l studio et tutto il pensier loro
> sol per volere interpretar post'hanno
> questa mia negra penna in fregio d'oro. (*Rime,* XXVII 44-46)

If viewed in this light, what would unfold through the poem would not be a wholehearted subscription to the humanist frame of mind, but a (playful) 'occasione di conflitto' with it (an attitude that Prandi has already referred to Ariosto).[108]

We shall now come to the most notable aspect of this capitolo, namely, the fact that it is a woman who prescribes silence. According to a long-established tradition, silence was seen – still in the Renaissance – as the most appropriate condition (if not the only possible one) for a woman, and a natural correlate of her subordinate position, though (according to the same misogynistic prejudice) it was often breached on account of women's natural

[108] Prandi 2006, 5. Prandi draws this conclusion from an analysis of the some episodes of the *Furioso* inspired by Humanistic sources, including the one involving Silence, in which the poet 'sembra rigettare in blocco […] tutta una folta topica che aveva […] indicato nel silenzio la *via regia* alla prudenza' (ibid., 23).

tendency to *garrulitas*.[109] Arguably, the speaker of capitolo XXVII addresses an audience that certainly includes men (as suggested by their being likened to the mythological figures of Tyresias and Actaeon): Ariosto is implying that men, too, may be guilty of *multiloquium*. As for the silence the lady keeps, it is not the traditional womanly submissive silence but rather its 'manly' version, associated with the courtly practice of social prudence and to *sapientia*. This particular point also associates this lady with Castiglione's *donna di palazzo*, who constituted another exception to the misogynistic *topos* (indeed the *Cortegiano* prescribes that the lady should be actively involved in courtly conversation and, just like the man, know not only how but also when to speak).[110]

That the speaker is entirely a creature of a 'modern courtly environment' further emerges from the final tercets, which develop the mythological comparison between the *garruli* and Tyresias and Actaeon, guilty of having seen Minerva and Artemis bathing:

> Se d'esser sopragionte a la fontana,
> nude il bel corpo, così increbbe ad esse
> che vendetta ne fero acerba et strana,
> non fora oltra ragion che mi dolesse
> che voi molto più adentro che alle gonne
> veder cercasse come il cor mi stesse. (*Rime*, XXVII 34-39)

To see the two goddesses naked was, for the two male mythological figures, as forbidden as it is for the contemporary reader of the poem to attempt to see through the lady's own heart, which is 'trasparente […] più che cristallo' (to quote from *Rime*, XXXI 15) to the gods but should not be entirely accessible to people. By implicitly rejecting the *topos* of the *homo fenestratus*, namely, the model (imposed by moral literature) of complete

[109] This network of *topoi* has been analysed, with a focus on Cinquecento treatises, by Sanson 2008.
[110] Sanson 2008, 219-222. It should be noted, however, that Castiglione's prescriptions in this sense are contradicted by the ladies' overall scarce contribution to the dialogue. Moreover, contradictions may be found within the set of virtues required of the *donna di palazzo*. Sanson blames this situation on Castiglione's dual aim: on the one hand, to furnish a female equivalent to the courtier, and on the other to endow her with those virtues that traditionally guaranteed woman's honour and respectability (discretion, virtuous motherhood, etc).

transparency of thoughts and feelings, the woman complies, instead, with the courtly code: it is significant that Calcagnini, too, should disown this *topos*.[111]

4.3. Against calumny: capitolo XXVIII

The poem that immediately follows in **Vr**, capitolo XXVIII, shares with the one we have just examined the choice of a female speaker, who also articulates a moral lesson in the form of an invective against *multiloquium*. Another common feature is the recourse to mythological examples: capitolo XXVIII opens (1-9) with the stories of the crow – who was originally white but was turned black by Apollo for having blurted out the betrayal of his beloved Coronis –[112] and of Ascalaphus,[113] metamorphosed by Ceres into an owl for telling Hades that Persephone had eaten pomegranate seeds in the Underworld (and who was therefore responsible for her being permanently bound to that world):

> Era candido il corvo, et fatto nero
> meritamente fu, perché troppo hebbe
> expedita la lingua a dire il vero.
> Haver tacciuto Ascalapho vorebbe
> el testimonio che sul stigio fiume
> alla matre e alla figlia udire increbbe:
> ché di funeste et d'infelici piume
> si ricoverse et restò augello obsceno,
> danato sempre ad abborrire il lume. (*Rime*, XXVIII 1-9)

This kind of sententious *incipit* is typical of the capitolo form. In this case, however, another possible source may be identified in a poem by Tito Vespasiano Strozzi, *In maledicum*; this is also articulated as an invective, which features the former of the two myths.[114] Furthermore, Ariosto's adoption of the ornithological imagery complies with a

[111] Snyder 2009; D'Ascia 1998, 318.
[112] *Met*., II 544-632.
[113] Ibid., V 533-550.
[114] *Eroticon liber II*, XV 15-16: 'Albus erat quondam volucris Phoebeia corvus, / nunc importunae praemia vocis habet'.

tradition that saw birds as a symbol for poets and courtiers (in all their possible meanings, both positive and negative), and which was very dear to him. This is testified by the passage of the lunar episode in the *Furioso*, in which swans and crows symbolize poets and adulators respectively (see Chapter II, 3.3).[115] Birds also feature – once again – in capitolo XXVII, where at 25-27 the myth of Cornix (the jackdaw) appears. The myth is found in the same book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that also features the myth of the crow:[116] Cornix was a woman who enraged Athena by telling her that Aglaurus had opened the basket containing the infant Erichthonius. The fact that the two myths should be so close in Ovid, incidentally, further enhances the link (also on a macrotextual level) between the two capitoli.[117]

While the target of XXVII is the garrulousness that is the outcome of excessive curiosity, that of XXVIII is slander. We gather that the speaker is a victim of gossip mongers, who have spread false rumours that stain her honour. The topic of calumny was often raised in contemporary treatises linked to a courtly environment, also as part of the legacy of the Humanistic tradition: Momus the god of slander, who appears in Lucian, featured in works by Alberti, Collenuccio and Calcagnini. The latter, besides making

[115] I shall also mention the *apologo della gazza* of *Sat*., III 109-150: during a drought, a farmer succeeds in finding water by digging a well; he allows only the members of his family and the most useful animals to drink of it, excluding a magpie, whom he greatly loved but was of no use to him. The apologue symbolizes the exclusion of Ariosto from Pope Leo X's favour. As noted by Campeggiani (Ariosto 2019, 112 footnote 45), the choice of the magpie may derive from one of Persius's *Choliambi*, which also uses it to symbolize those poets who are spurred on to write only by poverty.

[116] As pointed out by Rinaldi 2000, 350, the crow also appears in Calcagnini's *Descriptio silentii* as a symbol of *garrulitas*.

[117] *Met*., II 551-595; see *Rime*, XXVII 25-27: 'L'uccel c'ha bigio il petto et l'ale nere / fu prima donna, et diventò cornice / per esser troppo vaga di vedere'. Ariosto here makes two mistakes. Firstly, in the original story it was Aglaurus who was 'vaga di vedere [Erichthonius]', while the jackdaw was Cornix, and it was she who denounced Aglaurus's curiosity to Athena. Second, the fact that Cornix became a bird is not a consequence of this episode: she was already a jackdaw at the time of her delation (her metamorphosis, which had allowed her to escape Neptune's pursuit, had taken place earlier), and was in fact punished by Athena by exclusion from her retinue (as for Aglaurus, she was punished by being turned into stone). Ariosto's confusion probably derived from the interference of the myth of Ascalaphus from *Met*., V, which features in capitolo XXVIII; this might suggest that the two poems were written in parallel. I shall note that Segre makes the same mistake as Ariosto in commenting this lines (Ariosto 1954, 174).

slander the primary subject of a pamphlet, *De calumnia* (dedicated to Ercole I),[118] further lingers on it in his treatise on court life *De patientia seu de vita aulica*, in which he suggests patience as the best 'correction' to this widespread vice.[119] Finally, slander is also mentioned in the *Cortegiano*, where it is also specified (II.XC) that women are more often exposed to it; Ariosto himself reflects upon the subject in a proem of the *Furioso*, where he specifically addresses the envy of male writers owing to which ''l ben che ne [= of women] puon dir, spesso è taciuto, / e 'l mal, quanto ne san, per tutto s'ode' (*Fur*., XXXVII 2,5-6 C).

Exposure to calumny is the primary risk for anybody involved in the court system: accordingly, the implicit prescription of capitolo XXVIII is that all (courtiers) should refrain from it as much as they can, if they do not wish to entirely pervert the social (courtly) system. Ariosto expresses the need for honesty/truthfulness as a regulator of social relationships, and describes it similarly to how he describes *fides* in his love lyrics (see Chapter II), namely as a normative bond. While this bond is totally human, the gods are expected to watch over it, and their carelessness is lamented by the speaker, who in fact comes close to disregarding their existence:

> O di noi più non curano, o non hanno
> qua giù più forza, o de li nostri casi
> quei che regono il ciel più poco sanno.
> Che non vi sieno anchor crederei quasi,
> se non ch'io veggio pur per camin certo
> le stati e i verni andar, li orti et li occasi.
> Ma se vi son, come è da lor soferto
> che lode e oltraggi et che premii et suplici
> non sien secondo il bono e il tristo merto?
> Lor debito saria da le radici
> le malediche lingue sveller tosto
> che di falsi rumor sono inventrici. (*Rime*, XXVIII, 22-33)

[118] Calcagnini 1544, 415-423.
[119] On this pamphlet, which was plagiarized by Lucio Paolo Rosello in the second of his *Due dialoghi*, see Vagnoni 1998; Kennedy Ray 1998; Snyder 2009, 81-85; Cherchi 2016, 183; Ugolini 2020, 183.

She is moreover prepared to undergo every possible trial in order to shake off these false rumours (40-57).

This relatively clear-cut ideology would appear to cast Ariosto as a partisan of absolute truthfulness. This picture is complicated, however, by the mythological opening of the capitolo, as the two characters evoked, Corvus and Ascalaphus, were not punished for lying, but for speaking the truth. Although they are quoted by the speaker to demonstrate *a fortiori* the justness of punishing liars (that is: if they were punished for being 'del vero garuli et loquaci', 19, all the more should those guilty of actual falsehood be punished), nevertheless the moral we glimpse through this argument, which is ancillary to the main subject of the capitolo, is that truthfulness is not always the best mode of social interaction if its measure is exceeded.

If we try to harmonize these two concepts, the prescribed social rule that emerges is not truthfulness for its own sake, but rather, self-restraint and moderation:

> Porsi devrian tutte le lingue freno
> e in li altrui fatti apprender da costoro
> di spiar poco, et di parlarne meno. (*Rime,* XXVIII 10-12)

This confirms Ariosto's rejection of the model of *homo fenestratus*, and his interest in the themes of dissimulation and prudence, which emerges from a proem of the *Furioso*:

> Quantunque il simular sia le più volte
> ripreso, e dia di mala mente indici,
> si truova pur in molte cose e molte
> aver fatti evidenti benefice,
> e danni e biasmi e morti aver già tolte;
> che non conversiam sempre con gli amici
> in questa assai più oscura che serena
> vita mortal, tutta d'invidia piena. (*Fur*., IV 1 ABC)

This assumption partly corrects, or rather integrates, the position of Prandi, that on the subjects of truthfulness and appearance Ariosto's beliefs substantially differed from those

of Calcagnini.[120] While it is true that elsewhere, in the *Satire* and in several passages of the *Furioso* duly quoted by Prandi, a full endorsement of truth does emerge, his overall position is more complex.[121]

5. Conclusion

As shown in this chapter, Ariosto's portrayal of women, whose relevance in the *Furioso* is universally recognized, proves of significant importance also in the lyrics. It seems to have been, for Ariosto, an opportunity to confront a long-established *topos* of the vernacular tradition, and to inject it with various innovations. The presence of a significant classicizing vein, which interacts with the Petrarchan canon, is clear, and makes Ariosto's fashioning of this theme consistent with the general tendency described in the previous two chapters. At the same time, however, the poet makes a point of 'placing' his lady in his own time, reverberating through his lyrics the contemporary discourse on women and featuring details of the actual physical appearance (e.g. clothes) and of the social dynamics that defined the early-sixteenth century lady, thereby making her the subject of a 'new' (not merely topic) type of interest. This confirms another propensity displayed by Ariosto-the-lyric poet, which emerged in the previous chapters, i.e. to reflect in his poems his power of observation, anchoring them to a dimension that maintains a firm hold on reality. Given these premises, we may now move on to the last chapter, where these considerations also apply (at least in part, as it is concerned with references to contemporary politics in the *rime*), but which may also illuminate further aspects of the lyrics that to some extant have so far remained unexamined.

[120] Prandi 2006, esp. 29-30.
[121] For the whole discussion, see also Ugolini 2017.

IV. Beyond the Duchy: the Medici Dynasty in the *Rime*

0. Preamble

So far, my analysis has dwelt only on poems that have as their subject love, the theme which entirely dominates the *rime*. As a matter of fact, Ariosto apparently did not feel inclined towards political poetry, unlike some of his contemporaries, such as Tebaldeo or Sannazaro.

This is not to say that he wrote none. Some examples of lyrics commenting on contemporary political events or figures do exist: two extravaganti – sonnet XXXVI ed. Fatini, on the elevation of Julius II, and eclogue I ed. Fatini, on don Giulio's and don Ferrante's plot (for both poems, see Introduction, 5) – and four poems belonging to the main tradition: canzoni XLI and 49, and capitoli XXVI and XXX.

It is on the latter group that I am going to focus in this chapter. Although their subject matter includes politics, none of them is specifically about Ferrarese politics, and they all refer to members of the Medici family. While in XXX, which is in fact an elegy (and as such has been analysed also in Chapter I, 4), the theme of Florence is little more than a pretext to speak about love, in the other three the political references are more cogent as they were composed on the occasion of some crucial events in which the Medici dynasty was involved in the second decade of the sixteenth century.

To understand the special attention paid by Ariosto to the Medici in these poems – which is consistent with the attitude also displayed in the *Satire* and in the *Furioso* – one should not, however, look only to the importance of that family in the political scenario

of that decade, but also to the private reasons behind such an attitude. These emerge more clearly in the *Satire*, a work almost surely destined for a very restricted circulation.

In satira III (1518) the poet famously gives an intimate account of his personal relation to Giovanni de' Medici, the son of Lorenzo il Magnifico.[1] Ferrara had welcomed Giovanni's election as Pope Leo X (March 1513) as a fortunate event, which it was believed could ward off the constant threat that the former pope, Julius II, had posed on the duchy. As recorded in that satira, Ariosto himself had hoped to keep up good relations with the Pope, whom he had befriended at an earlier period ('tanto più ch'ero degli antiqui amici / del papa, inanzi che virtude o sorte / lo sublimasse al sommo degli uffici', *Sat.*, III 85-87).[2] He probably hoped to receive ecclesiastical benefices that would have enabled him to become financially independent. He was progressively to be disillusioned: indeed, he realized, over the numerous trips he took to Rome, that the pope preferred to secure appointments to his own family and his (mostly Florentine) entourage.[3]

The Florence-Rome nexus, emphasized by Leo X from the outset through the iconography of the official celebrations, and turned into a political union proper when his nephew Lorenzo 'The Younger' was entrusted with the government of Florence (1513),[4] was soon to become indivisible in Ariosto's perception. Rome is the main subject of satira II, which refers to a journey the poet made there in late 1517 in order to finalize the bull which guaranteed him succession to the ecclesiastical benefice of St Agata (the legal process to obtain this bull had been ongoing since 1511, when Ariosto had first asked the Medici for that benefice).[5] Even if we eschew the elements of literary stylization, the

[1] See also Catalano 1930-1931, I, 352-387.
[2] See the whole passage, ll. 82-102.
[3] *Sat.*, III 151-156: 'Cugin, con questo essempio vuo' che spacci / quei che credon che 'l Papa porre inanti / mi debba a Neri, a Vanni, a Lotti e a Bacci. / Li nepoti e i parenti, che son tanti, / prima hanno a ber; poi quei che lo aiutaro / a vestirsi il più bel de tutti i manti'.
[4] On Lorenzo's government, see Najemy 2006, 427-434.
[5] Catalano 1930-1931, I, 358.

satira harshly criticizes papal nepotism and the corruption of the Curia, and it essentially is another opportunity for Ariosto to reflect on courtly dynamics. This time he moves beyond the borders of Ferrara, but once again, as he had done in satira I (see Chapter I, 3.3), closes by speaking of his preference for a life free from greed and ambition.[6]

The poet's personal disillusionment culminated with his refusal, years later, in 1524, to accept the post of ambassador at the court of the new Medici Pope, Clement VII (Giulio de' Medici). This is the event that lay behind the seventh – and last – satira,[7] which takes stock of his expectations (it resumes, therefore, the theme of satira III: the two satire have in fact been viewed by some critics as a diptych proper).[8] In it, Ercole I's court astrologist Carlo Sosena pronounces a prophecy *ex eventu* on the decline of the Medici dynasty, which is to be as sudden as their growth has been, and will involve all members of the family: Giovanni (Leo X), Lorenzo, Giuliano Duke of Nemours, their wives, and their faithful advisers, the cardinals Luigi de' Rossi and Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena.[9]

> Chi avesse avuto lo spirito di Carlo
> Sosena allora, avria a Lorenzo forse
> detto, quando sentì duca chiamarlo;
> et avria detto al duca di Namorse,
> al cardinal de' Rossi et al Bibiena
> (a cui meglio era esser rimaso a Torse),
> e detto a Contessina e a Madalena,
> alla nora, alla socera, et a tutta
> quella famiglia d'allegrezza piena: […]
> — tutti morrete, et è fatal che muoia
> Leone appresso, prima che otto volte
> torni in quel segno il fondator di Troia. — (*Sat*., VII 94-105)

[6] See Crimi's introduction and commentary to satira II (Ariosto 2019, 65-93); on Ariosto's impressions of Rome, see at least Ragni 1975; Romano 2000 (and their bibliography).
[7] There is in fact no documentary evidence that this offer was actually made (see Paoli 2000, 58-59). Undoubtedly it obeys a certain exigency of self-fashioning, as well as wrapping up various strands present in the *Satire'*s 'macrotext'. On the literary relevance of the theme of renunciation, in this satira, see again Berra's commentary.
[8] Villa 2008, 515-516; the point is also discussed in Campeggiani 2017, 77.
[9] See Berra's commentary (Ariosto 2019, 249-251), and Villa 2008, *passim*.

On an entirely different plane should be placed the allusions to the Medici in the *Furioso,* a work intended for public circulation. In it, Leo X features in some passages that qualify as encomiastic, albeit not as mere flattery. In *Fur*., XXIV AB, XXVI C, the Pope is mentioned among the 'heroes' who, by combining their forces and led by Francis I, will overcome the monster of Avarice: a catalogue that is clearly utopian, as it brings together political figures who in fact occupied opposing camps of the political spectrum. In XV 74-79 AB; XVII C Ariosto pleads the pope to defend Italy from foreign invaders: this passage reveals the feeling of universal enthusiasm that marked Leo's elevation and was most likely written soon after that event (we shall return to both these passages later).[10]

I believe that the lyric poems dealing with the Medici also belong, together with the *Furioso*, to the 'public' literary coté, and that they share 'official' traits that may lead to suppose that the Medici were – or should have been, in Ariosto's original plans – their privileged addressees (again with the partial exception of XXX). As a matter of fact, diplomatic networking between Ferrara and Rome never ceased, even as the political plans that would put them in opposing camps were gaining force; and the exchange of poetry was a common feature of this diplomatic networking.

However, in addition to the possible diplomatic reasons, in writing these poems Ariosto may also have been conditioned by personal reasons. It is likely that his hopes of obtaining benefits from the Medici lasted throughout Leo's papacy, including the very same years in which he wrote satire I-III, which nevertheless present these ambitions as past: this is perceivable through certain 'folds' in the satire themselves, and relatable to

[10] The proem of XXXV in the 1516 *Furioso* (1-8) may be added. It refers to an earlier period, before Giovanni de' Medici rose to the papal throne, and is extremely ambiguous, if not openly incriminating: indeed, it would be deleted in the two later versions. See Bigi's commentary to *Fur*., XXXIX 1; a discussion on this proem is in Dorigatti 2011, 15-17; Campeggiani 2017, 119-127.

certain historical events that I will recall in due course.[11] In this light, the possibility that these poems were actually sent (or at least meant to be sent) to the Medici acquires a new significance. They seem to testify to Ariosto's fascination for the Tuscan-Roman milieu, and a stylistic analysis further confirms this, showing how he adopted models that are harder to detect in his other poetry. I will show this in my reading of the individual poems.

1. The composition of capitolo XXX

As I anticipated in Chapter I, 4, in capitolo XXX Ariosto includes a 50-line panegyric of Florence modelled on Leonardo Bruni's *Laudatio florentinae urbis*. Such an 'aware' borrowing means that the Florentine culture is here precisely recalled, a fact which strengthens the effect of its comparison with Ferrara.

Significantly, Ariosto leaves out the most important section of the *Laudatio*, that concerning the political institutions of Florence. Indeed, the core of the pamphlet – which was written in 1403-04, immediately after Florence's victory over the duchy of Milan (at the time ruled by Giangaleazzo Visconti) – was formed by the celebration of the moral values of the city and, above all, of the liberty of its citizens, which translated into a statement on the superiority of the republican regime over the despotism of monarchies:[12] Ariosto could clearly not include here a praise of the republican government such as that in his capitolo, since it clashed with the actual political situation of Florence, already under the Medici rule at the time he wrote it – indeed, towards the end an explicit allusion to the Medici is made: 'Gli tuoi Medici, anchor che sieno tali / che t'habian salda ogni tua antiqua piaga' (70-71). Also the very first lines of the capitolo select from Bruni's text only the elements which were acceptable after the restoration:

[11] Also according to Villa 2008, 523, only Leo X's death in 1521 costituted, for Ariosto, 'la sepoltura definitiva delle sue speranze romane'.
[12] Cipriani 1980, 6-7 26-27; Schoonhoven 2010, 460-461.

> Gentil città, che con felici auguri
> dal monte altier, che forse ben per sdegno
> ti mira sì, qua giù ponesti i muri,
> come del meglio di Toscana hai regno
> così del tutto havessi, ché 'l tuo merto
> fora di questo et di più imperio degno. (*Rime,* XXX 1-6)

In the first tercet, Ariosto espouses the well-known version of the myth according to which Florence was founded by the citizens of Fiesole[13] (in fact, the foundation myth of Florence had varied throughout the ages, according to the systems of power which exploited it). Moreover, and coherently with what we have seen above, Ariosto cuts out Bruni's statement about the republican liberty of Rome as a condition for the flourishing of Florence[14] and only mentions the state of peace ('Felici auguri') under which the settlement took place.[15] Conversely, he follows Bruni in highlighting Florence's right to aspire to the government of the entire world (ll. 5-6).[16]

As I said in Chapter I, the chronology of this poem is hard to determine. Ariosto often travelled to Florence between September 1512 (the month of the Medici restoration) and April 1519 (death of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino). The most accredited dating hypothesis is offered by Fatini, according to whom the capitolo refers to the journey of 30 August-8 September 1516.[17] Fatini does not justify this preference except by stating that the poem

[13] See *Inf.*, XV 61-63: 'Ma quello ingrato popolo maligno / che discese di Fiesole ab antico, / e tiene ancor del monte e del macigno'; Villani, *Cronica* I 38.
[14] *Laudatio*, 606: 'et simul intellegeretur eo tempore hanc coloniam deductam fuisse quo urbs romana potentia, libertate, ingeniis, clarissimis civibus maxime florebat'. Neither does Ariosto, however, adopt the opposite version of the myth, according to which Florence was founded during the Augustan empire: this version was appeled to in periods of 'monarchic' government of the city, such as under Lorenzo il Magnifico or Lorenzo 'the Younger'. For the monarchic versions of the foundation myth of Florence, see Cipriani 1980, 18, 23-36, 56-57; Schoonhoven 2010, 463-464.
[15] Actually, his point was not shared by all writers and erudites. See Salutati, *Invectiva*, 125 (quoted in Cipriani 1980, 5): 'Verum cum antiquissima civitas Faesulana in urbis huius corpus, sive bello, ut fama est, sive pace, captis montanis civibus amoenitate loci, confluxerit […]' (for this text see also Schoonhoven 2010, 460).
[16] *Laudatio*, 598: 'Quamobrem ad vos quoque, viri florentini, dominium orbus terrarum iure quodam hereditario ceu paternarum rermu possessio pertinet'. See Schoonhoven 2010, 461. A similar position can be found in Ugolino Verino's *De illustratione urbis Florentiae* (1483): see Cipriani 1980, 6-7.
[17] Catalano 1930-1931, I, 439; Fatini 1934, 182-184.

seems to reflect the mood of frustration which Ariosto experienced in the service of Cardinal Ippolito. He proposes, as an alternative option, the journey of February 1519, on account on ll. 37-38 – 'sì ben questi monti / t'han lastricata sin agli angiporti', which he refers to the pavement improvements commissioned by Lorenzo when he was in charge of the government of Florence. It seems to me that a more plausible hypothesis is offered by an earlier journey, which took place at a time closer to the Medici restoration, when the 'Florentine question' was still fresh news. The pun on the Medici may well have originated from Ariosto himself; however, it also belonged to the official self-fashioning of the dynasty,[18] and featured in the popular encomiastic poetry that was circulated immediately after their return. See, for instance, the following excerpt from a frottola (*Son le palle sì balzate*) included in a 1512 printed volume:

> Dulce medice et saputo
> per la nostra malattia,
> che il mal nostro ha conosciuto
> et rimedia tutta via. (35-38) [19]

I would like to suggest the hypothesis that the poem was written during Ariosto's stay in Florence between the 25th of December 1512 and the 15th of February 1513, when he had to collect some money owed to his cousin Rinaldo (a journey, as recorded by the letters, which he found extremely troublesome).[20] This would therefore place it before Giovanni de' Medici was elected pope, and also before Ariosto fell in love with Alessandra Benucci (21 June 1513), and it should therefore be assumed that the woman he longs for in the poem is someone else.

[18] The Medici adopted as patron saints of Florence sts Cosmas and Damian, the patron saints of doctors: Nestor 2001, 16-27.
[19] Quoted in Ridolfi 1949, 33-34.
[20] Catalano 1930-1931, I, 354; 396-397. Ariosto had to procrastinate the meeting with Rinaldo's debtor (the merchant Pierfrancesco de' Medici) several times, and was even made wait long hours at his door. The person whose request Ariosto repents to have fulfilled (66: 'et più a l'altrui che al mio desir m'atenni') is therefore, in this reading, Rinaldo.

Indeed, her identification as Alessandra should not (I believe) be taken for granted. The words Ariosto dedicates to her, in the final lines of the poem, are a stereotyped description likening her to a sorceress, which is definitely more 'literary' than the portrayal of Alessandra that emerges from the poems certainly written for her (see Chapter I, 4.2; 6.3.3; and Chapter III). Moreover, if the woman were Alessandra, the poem would probably have looked different: significantly, Alessandra hailed from Florence, but nothing emerges from the capitolo referencing such a fact. It is certainly true that their relationship was kept secret; however, the encomium of the city would have offered the perfect opportunity to allude to her at least indirectly, for instance through the praise of Florentine women (a theme that features in Bruni).

Another point that may support this chronological hypothesis is the comparison between Florence and Rome:

> Se dentro un mur, sotto il medesmo nome,
> fusser raccolti i tuoi palazzi sparsi,
> non ti serian da paregiar due Rome.
> Una so ben che mal te può uguagliarsi
> e mal forse ancho havria possuto prima
> che li edificii suoi le fussero arsi
> da quel furor che uscì dal freddo clima
> hor de' Vandali, hor de' Eruli, hor d'i Goti,
> a l'italica rugine aspra lima. (*Rime*, XXX 22-30)

Ariosto here is not simply following Bruni's *Laudatio* (in which Florence is ranked much above all other cities)[21] but he is also laying out an opposition between Florence and Rome. To be more precise, two themes are combined: the primacy of Florence over Rome, and the decadence of present-day Rome in comparison to its ancient magnificence. This is an unusual, even unique version af a comparison between the two cities, which

[21] See Chapter I, footnote 57. Cornazano's *De laudibus urbis Florentiae*, consisting of four capitoli modelled after Bruni's panegyric, also articulates a discourse aimed at establishing the primacy of Florence: 'Altre città da barbari fondate / sono, o da expulsi della lor provenza, / sì che non son sì degnamente nate' (III 25-27).

appears very rarely in the tradition:[22] when Rome is mentioned in relation to Florence this is always done in order to dignify Florence, since the latter's derivation from the former is claimed.[23] Moreover, since the election of Giovanni de' Medici as Pope Leo X, Florence and Rome were effectively under the direct rule of the same dynasty: their cultural kinship, already a *topos*, was further reinforced by official propaganda. I would then suggest that the low evaluation of Rome may have had a precise target, that is, Julius II, at those times the greatest enemy of Ferrara. An alternative hypothesis is that this critique may have been inspired by the same impressions that inspired Ariosto to write the second satira: but such an allusion to a private matter actually appears somewhat unusual within the genre of the elegiac capitolo.

While this hypothesis cannot be borne out unless new documents are found, I regard the attention Ariosto is here paying to Florence very significant, as it reveals the interest he took in that city and in its political as well as cultural institutions.

2. The canzoni on the death of Giuliano de' Medici

Canzone XLI and canzone 49 commemorate the death of Giuliano de' Medici (17 March 1516).[24] In the former (*Spirto gentil, che sei nel terzo giro*) the speaker is

[22] The only other instance to my knowledge is Giovanni Villani's *Nuova cronica*, in which we can also find another parallel between Florence and Rome (despite it refers to an earlier period), as the decadence of Rome is seen as a counterpoint to Florence's gradual rise (*Nuova cronica* IX, 36).

[23] Schoonhoven 2010, 461: 'With parts of Tuscany growing into a new unity under Florentine leadership […] it became possible to see the city as a new Rome at the heart of an Italian empire based in old Etruria. This powerful combination brought together Etruscan freedom and culture with Roman virtues and unity'.

[24] As demonstrated by Carrai 1998, the uncollected eclogue *Mentre che Dafni il grege errante serba* (featuring as eclogue II in Fatini's edition, and among the *extravaganti* in Finazzi's edition) also commemorates the death of Giuliano, hidden behind the name of 'Dameta'. Carrai also identified the shepherd who mourns him, Sarchio, as the Mantuan poet Nicolò D'Arco. The poem has been re-examined by Casadei 2004, 89-93: Casadei agrees with Carrai's proposal for the identification of the characters, but not with the attribution of the eclogue to Ariosto. Indeed, the poem displays a high number of words that do not occur elsewhere in Ariosto's work; moreover, it appears somewhat sloppy and stylistically coarser than the other eclogue by Ariosto, although the latter was written earlier. It should also be noted that the eclogue features in Anton Francesco Doni's *Marmi*: the author passes it off as his own, something he would never do with a poem by Ariosto. On these grounds, Casadei leans rather towards an attribution of the eclogue to Nicolò D'Arco, and suggests that it may have been found by the first publishers among Ariosto's

Giuliano's widow Philiberte of Savoy, who addresses the soul of her husband, voicing her sorrow for his death and her wish that she too could die so as to be with him:

> Spirto gentil, che sei nel terzo giro
> del ciel fra le beate anime asceso,
> scarco da mortal peso,
> dove premio si rende a chi, con fede
> vivendo, fu de honesto amore acceso,
> a me, che del tuo ben non già sospiro,
> ma di me che anchor spiro,
> poi che al dolor che ne la mente sede
> sopra ogn'altro crudel non si concede
> di metter fine all'angosciosa vita,
> gli occhi che già mi fur benigni tanto
> volgi alli miei, ch'al pianto
> apron sì larga et sì continua uscita;
> vedi come mutati son da quelli
> che ti solean parer già così belli. (*Rime*, XLI, 1-15)

Canzone 49 (*Anima eletta, che nel mondo folle*) is Giuliano's reply to his spouse from heaven: after greeting her in the first stanza, he consoles Philiberte by assuring her that he is enjoying the most perfect happiness, and that they will be reunited after her death.

> Anima eletta, che nel mondo folle
> et pien d'error sì saggiamente quelle
> candide membra belle
> reggi; che ben l'alto disegno adempi
> del Re delli elementi et de le stelle,
> che sì leggiadramente ornar ti volle,
> perch'ogni donna molle
> e facile a piegar ne li vitii empi
> potessi haver da te lucidi essempi
> che, fra regal delitie in verd'etade,
> a questo d'ogni mal seculo infetto
> giun'esser può d'un nodo saldo et stretto
> con summa castità summa beltade;
> da le sante contrade,
> ove si vien per gratia et per virtute,
> il tuo fedel salute
> ti manda, il tuo fedel caro consorte,
> che ti levò di braccia iniqua morte. (*Rime*, 49,1-18)

materials, or even that the printers may have wished to publish a false. I find Casadei's arguments convincing and have therefore left the eclogue out from my survey.

The main hypotext, especially for the former, is Bembo's canzone *Alma cortese, che dal mondo errante* (*Le rime*, 102), written in late 1507 to mourn the death of his brother Carlo. It is a text which soon became seminal in the history of lyric poetry as it succeeded in expanding and elevating the range of the Italian language to new heights. The choice of *Alma cortese* as a model, although not unprecedented in the Ferrarese milieu (it was probably mediated by a canzone by Muzzarelli following the same model)[25] is an unexpected one for Ariosto, as he did not find the 'stile sublime' and the form of the canzone itself congenial (see Introduction): a fact which suggests the usefulness of investigating the circumstances of their writing.

In other words, we should re-examine the question posed by Fatini, who wondered whether he wrote these canzoni out of flattery towards Leo X (Giuliano's brother), or – and this is the position the scholar ultimately subscribes to – they were inspired by sincere friendship for Giuliano.[26] As there can be no certainty on this issue (as we lack any external documentation describing the milieu in which these texts circulated), I will try to put forward some hypotheses. Before looking more closely at the poems, however, the figure which they celebrate should be given some attention.

2.1. Political context

Giuliano, often referred to as 'Il Magnifico' like his father Lorenzo, was the younger brother of Giovanni de' Medici. Between 1494 and 1512, he spent a period of exile from Florence travelling between the Italian courts, residing mostly in Urbino. At the time of

[25] Muzzarelli's *Alma felice e rara* was written as early as 1509 upon the tragic death of condottiero Ercole Cantelmo. The author dedicated the canzone to Ippolito d'Este, which makes its knowledge on Ariosto's part likely. In it, Cantelmo is represented similarly to Giuliano, as a young hero prematurely dead; moreover Muzzarelli, as well as Ariosto, intermingles the Bembian source with *Rvf*, LIII and even features the syntagm 'il gran popol di Marte' (71) which we also find in Ariosto.
[26] de' Medici 1939, XCII.

the restoration of the Medici (1512), Giovanni, the head of the family, was Cardinal and papal legate in Bologna; thereafter (in March 1513) he was elected Pope Leo X. In this context, Giuliano was in his brother's plans destined to take over the government of Florence; however, it soon emerged that he lacked the necessary authority, and Leo was forced to entrust the task to their nephew Lorenzo instead.[27]

Politics was not apparently Giuliano's main interests (being he much keener on poetry: around seventy lyric poems are estimated to have been written by him during his exile in Venice and Urbino, 1495-1500).[28] Despite this, Giuliano continued to be an essential pawn in Leo X's nepotistic strategy; indeed, the pope was aiming to carve out for his brother a principality in the territories of Parma, Piacenza, Modena and Reggio (the latter two belonging to the duchy of Ferrara).[29] To this end, he tried to maintain good relationships with both Spain and France: the outcome of his relationship with France was the marriage (10 February 1515) between Giuliano and Philiberte of Savoy, who was closely related to the French dynasty. When, however, Louis XII was succeeded by Francis I, whose claims to the Italian territory immediately became apparent, the pope began to play a delicate double game, joining Spain and the Empire in an anti-French league.[30] Giuliano, who harboured sincere pro-French sentiments, had tried to discourage his brother from joining the league, but unsuccessfully: the pope appointed him captain of the papal troops which were to support the league against France. Soon after, however, Giuliano contracted tuberculosis and was prevented from any further action; the battle of Marignano, which was fought on 13-14 September, saw no personal involvement on his part, as Lorenzo had taken up the command of the troops in his place. The outcome of the

[27] Najemy 2006, 426-427; Jungić 2018, 98.
[28] The first critical edition is that by Fatini (De' Medici 1939); the most recent contribution on Giuliano's poems is Vagni 2017.
[29] For Leo X's desire to take Ferrara, see Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, XVI 3.
[30] Najemy 2006, 430.

battle is well known: the defeated pope was forced to cede Parma and Piacenza, which once again were united to the Duchy of Milan, and negotiated the restitution of Modena and Reggio (which, however, in the end did not take place) to the Duke of Ferrara.[31]

In consideration of the new (albeit precarious) alliance established with the peace, Giuliano received the title of Duke of Nemours from Francis I. His illness, however, was worsening, and he died on 17 March 1516, thus leaving the way open for Leo to further develop his plans: the first of these was to dispossess the Duke of Urbino, Francesco Maria della Rovere, to the advantage of Lorenzo – something against which Giuliano had struggled, due to his friendship with the family which had offered him hospitality during his exile.[32]

2.2. The 'official' portrait of Giuliano in XLI

The fact that Ariosto knew Giuliano personally[33] led Fatini to read the canzoni as inspired by the personal motivation of friendship. While this is undoubtedly a plausible interpretation, it requires substantial integrations.

Elements in the two canzoni's style and contents would appear to suggest a more official finality, opening up the possibility that they may have been written on commission. Other points suggest instead that personal reasons may actually have inspired the poems, though we should perhaps look beyond pure friendship, and (also) consider Ariosto's desire to ingratiate himself with the Medici milieu: it seems to me most likely that the two types of motivations should be seen as functioning concomitantly, as I will try to show in this and in the next sections.

[31] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, XV.
[32] This is recorded by contemporary sources, among which Cerretani and Sanudo; see Jungić 2018, 207.
[33] In 1507 Ariosto probably visited Urbino, where Giuliano resided during his family's exile from Florence (Catalano 1930-1931, I, 372-373). In March 1513 Ariosto visited Giuliano in Florence to congratulate him on his brother's election as Pope Leo X (Ibid., I 353; I, 396); later the same year, in June 1513, they probably met again in Florence during the celebrations for St John the Baptist (Ibid., I, 413).

In canzone XLI, the most observable step away from the (still faithfully imitated) Bembian model consists in the introduction of the 'public' theme in the second part. With the death of Giuliano, Philiberte says, it is not just 'courtesy' and 'value' that have been lost (the same virtues whose loss was mourned by Bembo in *Alma cortese*),[34] but also all hopes for his future warlike endeavours. Here the poem stages the lament of the Roman people, and the personification of Rome itself appears; again we feel the echo of *Alma cortese* (which features the sorceress Manto and the personification of the Timavo river), with the difference, however, that in Bembo the tragedy lacks any more specifically political drive:

La cortesia e il valor che stati ascosi
non so in qual antri et tenebrosi lustri
eran molt'anni et lustri,
et che poi teco apparvero, e la speme
che, in più matura etade, all'opre illustri
pareggiassi di Publi et Gnei famosi
suoi fatti gloriosi,
sì che a sentire havessero l'extreme
genti ch'anchor vivea di Marte il seme,
hor più non veggio; né da quella notte
che agli occhi miei lasciasti un lungo oscuro,
mai più veduti furo,
ché ritornaro a·lloro antique grotte,
et per disdegno congiuraron, quando
del mondo uscir, torne perpetuo bando.

Del danno suo Roma infelice accorta
disse: «Poi che costui, Morte, mi tolli
non mai più i sette colli
duce vedran che trionfando possa
per sacra via trar cathenati colli.
De l'altre piaghe, ond'io son quasi morta,
forse sarei risorta;
ma questa è in mezzo il cor quella percossa
che da me ogni speranza n'ha rimossa».[35] (*Rime,* XLI 79-99)

Et fu sentito e 'n l'una e 'n l'altra riva

[34] Bembo, *Le rime*, 102,87-88: 'Valor e cortesia si dipartiro / nel tuo partir, e 'l mondo infermo giacque'.
[35] See Bembo, *Le rime*, 102,127-132: 'Per duol Timavo indietro si rivolse, / et vider Manto i boschi e le campagne / errar con gli occhi rugiadosi et molli; / Hadria le rive e i colli / percosse in vista oltre l'usato offesa'.

pianger donne et donzelle, figlie et matri,
et, da' purpurei patri
alla più bassa plebbe, il popul tutto,
et dire: «O patria, questo dì fra gli atri
de Alia et di Canne a' posteri se scriva,
que' giorni che captiva
restasti et che 'l tuo imperio fu distrutto,
né più di questo son degni de lutto». (Ibid., 106-114)

The lexical choices adopted throughout the canzone are also worth noting. Ariosto uses numerous Latinisms, names from Roman history ('Publi', 'Gnei', 'Allia', 'Canne') as well as rhetorical devices which confer *gravitas* (for example placing two adjectives before a noun): 'infinita inefabile bellezza' (16); 'riconoscenza' (34, a *hapax* in Ariosto); 'delicate alabastrine membra' (58); 'latebrosi' (77); 'lustri' (in the Latin meaning of 'cavern', also a *hapax* in Ariosto); 'patri' and the noun 'atri' (108-110, both are *hapaxes* in Ariosto – 'patri' being considered as a synonym of 'patrizi'),'occaso' (117); 'rapportarli' (125). In some cases, there is a similarity with certain political passages from the *Furioso*.[36]

The celebratory rhetoric of the canzone is perhaps most importantly built on the unique way in which the figure of Giuliano is represented. In it, Vagni has correctly recognized a 'rilievo pubblico e ufficiale marcato',[37] highlighting its closeness in spirit to Michelangelo's austere statue of Giuliano in the Sagrestia Nova of San Lorenzo.[38] It should perhaps be added that Giuliano emerges here as a military commander proper

[36] See, in the canzone, the syntagm 'molt'anni e lustri' and the rhyme *lustri* : *illustri,* and *Fur*., XXXIII 79,5-8 A; XXXI 65 B; XXXVI 75 C: 'Quinci Mongrana e quindi Chiaramonte / le due progenie deriver sapea, / ch'al mondo fur molti e molt'anni e lustri / splendide, e senza par d'uomini illustri'; *Fur*., XXXIII 21,1-4 (C only): 'Lor mostra poi (ma vi parea intervallo / di molti e molti, non ch'anni, ma lustri) / scender dai monti un capitano Gallo, / e romper guerra ai gran Visconti illustri'; *Fur*., XXXVII 3,1-6 AB; XLI C (this also has the word 'cortesia'): 'L'inclita stirpe che per tanti lustri / mostrò, di cortesia, sempre gran lume, / e par ch'ognor più ne risplenda e lustri, / fa che con chiaro indizio si presume, / che chi progenerò gli Estensi illustri'. The Petrarchan syntagm 'di Marte il seme' at 87 (see below) may be compared with *Fur*., XXXIII 75,3-4 A; XXXI 71 B; XXXVI 71 C: 'andaro / ad abitar ne la città di Marte'.

[37] Vagni 2017, 145. This contrasts (as noted ibid., 146-147), with the funeral oration written by Marcello Virgilio Adriani (see, for its text and analysis, McManamon 1991), which insists on Giuliano's Florentine origin.

[38] Vagni, therefore, also implicitly objects to Fatini's position: indeed, his argument implies that Ariosto wanted to celebrate Giuliano in his official capacity.

('duce', 82): ll. 110-112 mention the battles of Allia and of Canne, when Rome was 'caught' ('captiva'), thus openly suggesting the figure of Giuliano as a (failed) liberator of the city. Not coincidentally, Ariosto's other model besides *Alma cortese* is *Rvf*, LIII (*Spirto gentil, che quelle membra reggi*), the epitome of the political 'Roman' canzone. This poem by Petrarch is clearly echoed, apart from the identical opening hemistich and from one borrowing ('di Marte il seme': see *Rvf*, LIII 26: 'se 'l popol di Marte'), in the staging of the confusion of the population: in Ariosto, for being deprived of their only guiding light, in Petrarch, for never even having one.[39] Indeed, *Rvf*, LIII is famously addressed to an unidentified senator of Rome,[40] whom the speaker begs to restore political peace: Petrarch exploits this subject to launch into a harsh critique of the situation of contemporary Italy, which he describes as fragmented, 'vecchia, ozïosa e lenta' (12), and of the weakness of Rome, in a situation of general decadence, which he nostalgically compares (in the third stanza) to its past magnificence.

What will of course strike the knowledgeable reader about Ariosto's canzone XLI is that his representation of Giuliano as a hero is in no respect adherent to reality. Giuliano was no man-at-arms and, as mentioned before, had to quit the only military job he had been entrusted with, that of Captain-General of the Papal Army, because of his illness. Ariosto's intention was clearly to provide a hyperbolic description, which, unrealistic though it may have been, was nonetheless acceptable in an encomiastic context.

This point prompts another observation, which, though slightly off our main theme, is still interesting. It is known that Giuliano, as the designated lord of the Emilian state in Leo X's plan, was the original dedicatee of Niccolò Machiavelli's *Il principe*, which was begun in 1512. It is not clear how much of the pamphlet had been written by the time

[39] *Rvf*, LIII 57-62: 'Le donne lagrimose, e 'l vulgo inerme / de la tenera etate, e i vecchi stanchi / ch'ànno sé in odio et la soverchia vita, / e i neri fraticelli e i bigi e i bianchi, coll'altre schiere travagliate e 'nferme, / gridan: O signor nostro, aita, aita'.
[40] On this point, see Petrarch 2005, 274-275 and bibliography.

Machiavelli switched dedicatees and addressed his work to Lorenzo the Younger (a change which took place in 1513, when Lorenzo, who had just been nominated governor of Florence by the Pope, seemed a better man to bet on). Most importantly, it has been debated whether the final *exhortatio*, in which Machiavelli encourages his addressee to redeem Italy from its invaders (XXVI. *Exhortatio ad capessendam Italiam in libertatemque a barbaris vindicandam*), was initially conceived with Giuliano in mind or not. Mario Martelli, who edited *Il principe*, believes that it would not have been politically viable for Machiavelli to represent Giuliano as a warrior, since knowledge of his poor health was widespread.[41] Martelli's view is generally shared by scholars, with the exception of Giuliano's most recent biographer, Josephine Jungić, who concludes, on the basis of a comparative analysis of various Medici-related sources, that the image of condottiero which emerges from the *exhortatio* could actually, in an encomiastic context, be acceptable for Giuliano – she objects, therefore, to Martelli's view, and argues in favour of Giuliano as the original dedicatee of the *exhortatio*.[42] Jungić does not take into consideration canzone XLI to support her thesis, but as a matter of fact, the portrait Ariosto paints is exactly along these lines. I believe, therefore, that Machiavelli scholars should consider this canzone in a new discussion on the role played by Giuliano in the composition of *Il principe*.

Ariosto's intention of heroicizing Giuliano is even more evident if we consider what he left *out* from his portrait: he excludes his intellectual features, nor does he pay tribute to him as a poet. This is surprising, because Giuliano often emerges from contemporary accounts as a man of high refinement and poetic sensitivity. He features as an interlocutor in Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua*, where he (the only native Tuscan speaker among

[41] The dedicatee of the *exhortatio* is, in this interpretation, Lorenzo (Machiavelli 2006, 35-38).
[42] Jungić 2018, 173-175.

those present) defends the primacy of his language and leads the discussion on the rules of the vernacular for the whole of the third book; and in Castiglione's *Cortegiano*, where he is given the task to describe the ideal *donna di palazzo* and engages in a defence of woman (see Chapter III).[43]

All the elements, so far, point to the 'public' role of XLI, which celebrates Giuliano as a Roman citizen (an honour conferred on him by Leo X in a 1513 ceremony of a legendary lavishness),[44] as the Captain-General of the Roman troops, and as a potential liberator of Rome.

2.3. Giuliano's reply: canzone 49

Canzone 49, as hinted at, is configured as a response to the preceding one. Giuliano, speaking from the third circle, invites Philiberte to take comfort and rejoice in his condition, which is the most desirable, in that it is free of all human cares. He strongly urges her, as she is still of this world, to beware of not giving in to earthly vices and most importantly to guard her chastity by not marrying a second time. Giuliano praises Philiberte for her distinguishing qualities of constancy, fidelity and chastity, which endow her with a claim to honour even greater than that which comes from her illustrious lineage.

It is through this nexus that Ariosto introduces the political argument in the second part of the canzone. This consists in an encomium directed towards Philiberte's relatives: first the family into which she was born, namely, the Savoy and King Francis I (Philiberte's nephew); then her acquired family, that is Lorenzo il Magnifico (133-144) and her brother-in-law, Pope Leo X – the latter is described in the act of leading a crusade

[43] Vagni 2017, who had already noted Ariosto's silence on this issue (147-148), concluded that Ariosto must have drawn on the official representation of Giuliano at that stage, before the image later imposed by Castiglione and Bembo in their dialogues, which was framed in Urbino's milieu and more focused on his intellectual activity. It should be remembered, however, that Francesco Vettori had defined Giuliano 'più presto da corte che da guerra' (Vettori 1972, 160).
[44] An account of the ceremony is included in Palliolo 1885.

(a reference to a project which the Pope had long been announcing he would undertake, but which never came to anything):

> Questo [‘nome’ of ‘fede et castità’] è più honor che scender da la augusta
> stirpe d’antiqui Othoni estimar dêi;
> di ciò più illustre sei
> che d’esser de’ sublimi, incliti e santi
> Philippi nata, et Ami et Amidei,
> che fra l’arme d’Italia e la robusta
> spesso a’ vicini ingiusta
> feroce Gallia, hanno tant’anni et tanti
> tenuto sotto il lor giogo constanti
> con li Alobrogi i populi de l’Alpe,
> e de’ lor nomi le contrade piene
> dal Nilo al Boristene
> e da l’extremo Idaspe al mar di Calpe.
> Di più gaudio ti palpe
> questa tua propria et vera laude il core,
> che di veder al fiore
> di lise d’oro e al santo regno assunto
> chi di sangue e d’amor t’è sì congiunto. (*Rime*, 49,109-126)
>
> […] Né tanto val ch’a questo pregio monti
> che ’l sacro honor de le erudite fronti,
> quel tosco in terra e in ciel amato lauro,
> socer ti fu, le cui mediche fronde
> spesso alle piaghe, donde
> Italia morì poi, furon ristauro;
> che fece all’Indo e al Mauro
> sentir l’odor de’ suoi rami soavi,
> onde pendean le chiavi
> che tenean chiuso il tempio de le guerre,
> che poi fu aperto e non è più chi ’l serre. (Ibid.,134-144)
>
> Non poca gloria è che cognata e figlia
> il Leon Beatissimo ti dica,
> che fa l’Asia e l’antica
> Babilonia tremar sempre che rugge;
> e che già l’Aphro in l’Ethiopia aprica
> col gregge et con la pallida famiglia
> di passar si consiglia;
> et forse Arabia et tutto Egitto fugge
> verso ove il Nilo al gran cader remugge. […] (Ibid.,145-155)

Ida Campeggiani, in her recent monograph on Ariosto, dedicates some pages to the analysis of this canzone. She detects in the encomiastic passage quoted above an antiphrastic intention, which she believes to be close to the register of the *Satire*. This irony addresses, Campeggiani writes, Leo X and his court: ostensibly presenting the family relation with the Pope as cause for pride, Giuliano is in fact subtly suggesting 'i motivi del disonore insito in tale parentela'.[45] Indeed, in her opinion the celebration of the crusade project cannot but be ironic, considering the fanciful and somewhat specious (already in the eyes of his contemporaries) nature of the scheme. On the wave of this interpretation, Campeggiani also dates canzone 49 to 1518: namely, the year in which the crusade project had finally lost all its credibility in the common opinion.[46] She argues, therefore, that the two canzoni have a different origin and a different register (she does not touch upon XLI, but her argumentation implies that she believes it was written without any satirical intention); furthermore, she suggests that Ariosto wrote them on his own personal initiative, to commemorate a friend whom he saw as being much finer and nobler than the rest of his family.[47]

Campeggiani's interpretation is valuable because it raises an important issue which in fact also regards XLI: there is a veneer of ambiguity in both works that impedes a univocal interpretation (we shall be returning shortly to these 'problematic' elements). I should state here, however, that I do not fully accept this reading. While it is true that a glorification of Leo X seems out of place with reference to an event that was announced but never actually took place, we have just seen that similar excesses feature in the characterization of Giuliano, which there are no grounds to take as ironic. This is, in other terms, a literary register which Ariosto knew and practised (although not in his most

[45] Campeggiani 2017, 138.
[46] Ibid., 131-132 (she also quotes Guicciardini's words on the fancifulness of this project).
[47] See ibid., 128-139.

successful efforts). Moreover, if there were irony, this would be exclusively deployed in the final part and its presence would determine a sudden swing in mood and direction compared to what comes before, namely the praise of the Savoy, of Francis I and Lorenzo il Magnifico, whose encomiastic intention cannot, I believe, be doubted. It would constitute, in other words, a 'register fracture' within a single text, which is not only very hard to detect, but, and partly also on account of this, essentially ineffectual. Also, from a formal point of view it seems historically unlikely to imagine that Ariosto should use the genre of the canzone as a vehicle for satire;[48] it seems even more implausible that he should choose to desecrate the model of *Alma cortese*, which was highly respected among his contemporaries as well as by Ariosto himself (especially if one considers the esteem in which he held Bembo and the interest he had in the innovative aspects of his work).

I feel therefore the more correct stance is to embrace the traditional interpretation, which sees this canzone as homogeneous to the former in both register and intention. Indeed, one feels that it was conceived even more specifically with a 'Roman' reception context in mind; this hypothesis would seem to be bolstered by two facts in particular. The first is the insistence with which Giuliano advises Philiberte to remain chaste by not remarrying:[49] this point has been convincingly interpreted by Vagni in the light of a specific event, that is, the dispute Leo X had engaged in against the French Royal family, in order to retrieve Philiberte's dowry (in fact, the pope refused to pay the last instalments of the dowry because of the financial difficulty he was facing).[50] If this interpretation is right, Ariosto is here endorsing the pope's position; which makes it even clearer that his

[48] None of the canzoni that adopt the same metrical scheme as 49 (listed in Gorni 2008, 275-277) has a satirical content: this was a 'noble' tradition influenced by its archetype, *Rvf*, CCLXIV.
[49] *Rime*, 49,91-99: 'Questo non dico già perché d'alcuno / freno a i desiri in te bisogno creda, / ché da nuova altra teda / so con quanto odio et quanto horror ti scosti; / ma dicol perché godo che proceda / come conviensi, e come è più opportuno, / per salir qui ciascuno / tuo passo, e che tu sappia quanto costi / il meritarci i ricchi premii posti'.
[50] De' Medici 1939, XCIII-XCIV.

privileged audience in this situation was Roman. The second point in support of the 'Roman' hypothesis is the poem's envoy. In it, Giuliano entrusts the song to Cardinal Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena, so that he may pass it on to Philiberte; he praises the Cardinal's fidelity (which incidentally allows us to identify the *terminus ante quem* of the poem, namely, Bibbiena's death on 9 November 1520):

> Quel cortese signor c'honora e illustra
> Bibiena, e 'nalza in terra e in ciel la fama,
> se come fin che là giù m'hebbe appresso
> m'amò quanto se stesso,
> così lontano et nudo spirto m'ama;
> s'anchora intende et brama
> satisfare a' mei preghi, come suole,
> queste fide parole
> a Philiberta mia scriva o rapporti,
> et preghi per mio amor che si conforti. (*Rime*, 49,163-172)

Bibbiena used to be one of Giuliano's closest friends, and one of the very few who were present at his deathbed: his mention appears, therefore, entirely justified by the context. As a matter of fact, Campeggiani sees in this envoy further clues to support her antiphrastic reading of the canzone. The praise of Bibbiena, she writes, is excessive, since he 'di fatto svolgeva poco sublimi pratiche burocratiche';[51] most of all, she finds it hard to believe that Ariosto could *seriously* celebrate him, considering the indifference Bibbiena had shown towards him immediately after the elevation of Leo X. According to Campeggiani, therefore, Ariosto featured him so as to covertly allude to his personal disillusion about the Papal court and Bibbiena himself, whose fortune was entirely made by the Medici brothers.[52]

[51] Campeggiani 2017, 130.

[52] Campeggiani notes that the syntactical construct 'fin che […] m'amò quanto se stesso' (165-166) reappears, in a similar guise, in the *Satire* with reference to the past friendly attitude of Leo X: 'e fin che a Roma se andò a far Leone […] mostrò amar più di me poche persone' (*Sat.*, III 97-99): by comparison with this passage, she also detects in the canzone an ironic note on the theme of love seen as an obligation.

The episode Campeggiani is referring to is well known. Immediately after the election of Leo X, Ariosto tried to accost Bibbiena, but unsuccessfully.[53] Bibbiena, moreover, was put in charge of the registration of the bull of St Agata, an exceedingly long bureaucratic process, which Ariosto ultimately had to pay for himself (April 1518), despite his several requests for dispensation.[54] Ariosto's bitterness must have undoubtedly been great, but I do not think this should necessarily imply that he stopped trying to ingratiate him. Bibbiena was no common bureaucrat; in fact, he was probably the most powerful man at the papal court, and was known as *alter papa*.[55] In light of this, Vagni's hypothesis that the canzone was commissioned by the two prelates should probably be favoured;[56] I also believe the other interpretative option, which looks at it as a personal initiative on the part of Ariosto, is equally viable: in this case the poet's aim should not be seen as purely that of paying homage but rather of 'getting himself noticed' and once more to ask for favours, from Bibbiena himself, and through him, from the Pope himself. If we then suppose that the canzone was written before the matter of the bull came to a conclusion, we can see how beneath this envoy there may lie an implicit 'reminder'.

However, it was not just to Bibbiena-the-man-who-had-influence-over-the-Pope that Ariosto was probably appealing, but also to Bibbiena-the-man-of-letters; with this person

[53] *Lettere*, 14 (7 April 1513): 'Usa messer Bernardo per mezo credo poter male, perché è troppo gran maestro et è gran fatica a potersegli accostare'. It is probable that the recrimination in *Sat.*, VII 40-42: ('[…] tanti amici podestade / hanno avuto di farlo [= of making it possible for me to afford to live 'in libertade'], e pur rimaso / son sempre in servitude e in povertade) should indeed be addressed to Bibbiena, as emerges from Virginio's notes (Ariosto 2019, 243 footnote 24).

[54] The episode is evoked with sharp irony in *Sat.*, III 181-183: 'Di mezo quella bolla anco cortese / [Leo X] mi fu, de la quale ora il mio Bibiena / espedito m'ha il resto alle mie spese'. See also Catalano 1930-1931, I, 363-364.

[55] Bibbiena's prestige may be garnered also by his inclusion, in the *Furioso*, among the heroes who overcome the monster of Avarice. Following a long celebration of Francis I, Ariosto lists other 'lesser' personalities of his time: the first to be mentioned is Bibbiena, whose praise covers half an octave (*Fur.*, XXIV 48,5-8 AB; XXVI 48,5-8 C: 'Quivi un Bernardo tra' primi si lesse, / che Merlin molto nel suo scritto apprezza. / – Fia nota per costui (dicea) Bibiena, / quanto Fiorenza sua vicina e Siena –'). The most exhaustive biographical study on Bibbiena is Moncallero 1953; see also Dionisotti 1969.

[56] Vagni 2017, 145.

he felt he had shared interests, particularly relating to the theatre.[57] Moreover, Dovizi was closely linked to Bembo, with whom (together with Giuliano himself) he had sojourned in Urbino – and actually, it was Bibbiena who masterminded Bembo's call to Rome in 1513 as *segretario ai brevi*. It is unlikely that Ariosto should still entertain hopes of an equally prestigious call (if indeed he ever had), but within such context, the fact that he echoed the model of *Alma cortese* takes on new significance (it should also be noted that Bembo had sent this canzone precisely to Bibbiena for corrections).[58] All this seems to point to Ariosto's aspirations to be acknowledged by the Roman milieu, by implicitly homaging an 'old friend', Bembo, whom he perhaps hoped to blandish by marking out *Alma cortese* as a powerful poetical matrix and proclaiming himself his follower.

Following, therefore, the 'traditional' interpretation of this canzone, I shall now spotlight certain elements of affinity with XLI: these will show how, even though 49 was probably not written in parallel with XLI but later (see below), it nevertheless constitutes a development of the same structural, stylistic and thematic solutions, and may be envisaged as forming with it an actual diptych.

2.4. A common antiquarian mould

In 49, Ariosto makes a number of lexical and rhetorical choices that are analogous with those described in relation to XLI: again we find Latinisms ('teda', 93; 'Gallia', 116; 'Alobrogi', 118; 'Aphro', 149, 'palpe', 122, with the Latin meaning – a *hapax* in Ariosto – of 'enticing', 'remugge', 153) and nouns preceded by more than one adjective ('mondane aspre fortune', 49; 'sublimi, incliti et santi', 112).

[57] For the prologue of the *Negromante*, a comedy designed for the papal milieu (despite its extremely problematic and ambiguous nature, and despite the fact it was never staged; see below), Ariosto was probably influenced by the *Argumento* of Bibbiena's *Calandria*, from which he picked up and varied a number of points; see Campeggiani 2017, 85-87 and its bibliography.
[58] Vagni 2017, 145; Bembo 2008, I, 239.

Even the distribution of the subject matter obeys similar criteria: in both poems a reasonably well-marked separation may be observed between a first part, dedicated to the 'intimate' conversation between husband and wife (inclining towards grieving in XLI, towards *consolatio* in 49) and a second part, in which political subject matter is voiced.

The idea of a common project is also bolstered by the recurrence of terms that are identical, or similar, or traceable to the same source:

> 'Spirto gentil' (XLI 1); 'quelle / candide membra belle / reggi' (49,2-4)[59] (both from *Rvf*, LIII 1: 'Spirto gentil, che quelle membra reggi')
>
> 'cortesia e valor' (XLI 76); 'per gratia e per virtute' (49,15)
>
> 'captiva / restasti' (XLI 112-113); 'captiva / del mondo' (49,77-78)
>
> 'pareggiassi di Publi et Gnei famosi' (XLI 81); 'il chiaro sol di tua virtù pareggi' (49,57)
>
> 'rapportarli' (XLI 125); 'rapporti' (49,173)

As Carrai has shown, in his choice of a diptych-like configuration Ariosto can count on a tradition of coupled texts which developed the theme of the funeral *consolatio* within a dialogic poetic structure whose lyric voices were those of a husband and a wife. Apart from examples in the vernacular, such as Tebaldeo's sonnets for the death of the Ferrarese courtier Comparino Guarnieri (in the former poem his spirit consoles his wife, who responds by assuring him that she will remain chaste),[60] the prevailing inspiration was probably a classical model which exerted a great deal of influence during the

[59] Noted also by Vagni 2017, 144.

[60] Tebaldeo, *Rime extravaganti*, 550 and 551. Tebaldeo's influence should not be underestimated, as he authored several funeral poems (Delcorno Branca 1970, 216-217). His Latin poem *Catharina Paulo Antonio Trotto marito suo carissimo* (discussed in Pasquazi 1966, LXIV-LV; the text is ibid., 54-57) should also be mentioned; in it, again, we find a noblewoman consoling her spouse from heaven.

Renaissance: the epitaph of Claudia Omonea.[61] Similarities in theme are evident (as detailed by Carrai): it is structured as a series of back-and-forth exchanges between Atimeto, who laments the loss of his wife Omonea, expressing his wish to follow her to the grave, and Omonea herself, who in her attempts to comfort him turns to a *viator* to whom she explains that she suffers less for her own death than for the pain this has caused to her husband. The use of such a source contributes greatly to the antiquarian patina of the two canzoni.

2.5. Criticism on contemporary times

2.5.1. Fortune and ambition

Besides these formal analogies, we encounter elements of thematic closeness. Both Giuliano and Philiberte are set apart from the people who surround them, the former, through his 'cortesia' and 'valore', the latter through the perfect fusion of chastity and beauty; this exemplarity in both cases triggers a harsh polemic against the contemporary political and moral scene. This criticism gains momentum and becomes more insistent in 49, through the voice of Giuliano's spirit: he condemns the 'mondo folle / e pien d'error' (2-3) or 'questo d'ogni mal seculo infetto' (11) dominated by ambition: 'desir, che come serpe annoda' (159). In this canzone, moreover, a lexical preference for terms denoting instability emerges, underscoring Giuliano's new-found separateness from such a state: 'mondane aspre fortune' (33); 'col tuo mortale a patir caldo e verno' (46); 'infida e mal sicura valle' (59); 'un anno / di falsi gaudii o quattro o sei' (86-87); 'speranza o tema' (89). The two lines 'Volga Fortuna il perno / alla sua rota in che i mortali aggira' (50-51) are especially intriguing: they include a retouched version of Giuliano's motto GLOVIS

[61] Carrai 2000, 383-387. The scholar points out that the texts which form the epigraph were also copied in the 'codice Bevilacqua' (Estense lat. 1080), an important collection of texts belonging to the Estense cultural milieu.

(which read backwards is SIVOLG[E]). This was first adopted by him on his family's return to Florence in 1512, to signify the sudden change of Fortune for the better: the motto is modified in the canzone, through the use of the subjunctive mood ('volga'), which denotes Giuliano's new indifference towards the earthly life.[62] Fortuna was also a historiographical and poetic commonplace linked to Leo X, and featured repeatedly in the ephemeral decorations displayed during the celebrations for his elevation to the papal throne.[63]

It is here, in the dismantling of a typically 'Medicean' idea, that a note of ambiguity may be detected. A similar criticism of fortune and ambition is also found in the third satira, which was written in the spring of 1518, and is therefore chronologically very close to the canzone. As I anticipated in the Preamble, in this satira Ariosto resentfully reviews his relationship with Leo X, who, despite their friendship, had never granted him any relevant benefice; at a certain point, however, he wonders whether he would have in fact been satisfied, had he been assured of such benefits. This heralds that famous reflection on the insatiability of human desires that is the *apologo della luna* (208-231): in this tale,[64] an unspecified people believe they can capture the moon at the top of a hill, which here symbolizes 'la ruota di Fortuna' (229); Ariosto's stoical conclusion is that his position of social retreat is preferable to the exhausting pursuit of riches. The similarities between the satira and the canzone lie, in addition to this generic affinity in theme, in the deployment of the metaphor of the snake in its moralizing, and ultimately biblical, sense,

[62] It is in any case also true that Ariosto often uses the image of the wheel of fortune, which he derived from popular imagination: Campeggiani 2017, 45-49.
[63] Villa 2008, 516-520 and bibliography.
[64] One recent interpretation is that put forward by Campeggiani 2017, 31-76; see also her bibliographical references.

in connection, that is, to the idea of temptation (in the canzone 'desir, che come serpe annoda', 159; 'venenosi serpi', 68; in the satira 'sitibonda mia cerasta', 198).[65]

By its vein of criticism, the canzone introduces a 'chiaroscuro' effect within the framework of the encomiastic canzone. It is not, however, such a heavy-handed shading as would have prevented its circulation (unlike what probably happened in the case of the *Negromante*; see below). The subject was predictable within a moralizing context as well as within the consolatory genre itself, and has deep roots in the Humanistic background common to both Ariosto and Leo X; my reckoning is therefore that, in such a formulation it could not have displeased the pope.

2.5.2. Warfare

Another potentially problematical issue that runs through the two canzoni, is their references to the state of the war the Italian peninsula was involved in, following the death of Lorenzo il Magnifico: 'Italia morì poi' (*Rime,* 49, 139), 'le chiavi / che tenean chiuso il tempio de le guerre, / che poi fu aperto e non è più chi 'l serre' (142-144).[66] The 'accusation' thus worded is not to be seen as specifically addressed to Leo X; it seems rather to pursue a theme already present in XLI, where the allusion is more generically to warfare in Italy, and to how it had become prey to foreign powers (thereby alluding to a joint responsibility).

If one were to identify a specific reference, this would then be to France. As a matter of fact, some pallid anti-French hints may be detected in both poems. In XLI, the supposed 'enemy' from which Giuliano might have liberated Rome (if he had lived) is to be identified with France, against which Giuliano had been intended to move war as

[65] This meaning associated with the snake is not common in lyric poetry, where it is usually associated with the 'cruel' elegiac woman.
[66] The point is discussed in Campeggiani 2017, 137.

Captain-General of the Church. In 49, in the context of the encomium of Philiberte's relatives, not only does the French king receive only the briefest of mentions (unlike the Medici),[67] but France itself is connoted in a negative way: 'spesso a' vicini ingiusta / feroce Gallia' (115-116). **Mn**, a manuscript testifying to a stage intermediate between **Vr** and **F**,[68] has a slightly different reading for these lines: 'e l'inimica / che sempre la faticha / feroce Gallia'. Finazzi regards this variant as more aggressive, on account of the substitution of 'sempre' for 'spesso' (and, consequently, dates it to 1526-27, the period of hostility between Ferrara and France).[69] I think, however, that a negative meaning is also conveyed by the other reading: in both cases, the take on France is striking, especially if one contrasts it with the homage paid to Tuscany, 'paese gentil ch'Apenin fende / e l'Alpe e il mar diffende' (132-133).

Soon after Giuliano's death, it became clear that France and the Holy Roman Empire, the two greatest powers of the time, were seeking to extend their power over Italy, violating the treaty of peace which had followed the battle of Marignano. It is known that Ariosto throughout his life was sympathetic towards Francis I (even when, years later, the Duchy of Ferrara changed the course of its policy and allied with the Emperor Charles V):[70] it is, therefore, surprising that he did not deploy the celebration of Giuliano – a Francophile who was moreover related to the French royal family – to allow this sympathy to fully emerge, and rather, albeit ambiguously, seems to betray an almost opposite sentiment.

It is perhaps more plausible to think that here Ariosto is once again trying, if not to fully ventriloquize the Pope's position (something that would have been risky for him, as

[67] *Rime*, 49,122-126: 'Di più gaudio ti palpe / questa tua propria et vera laude [= chastity] il core, / che di veder al fiore / di lise d'oro e al santo regno assunto / chi di sangue e d'amor t'è sì congiunto'.
[68] Finazzi 2002-2003, 12-13; 70-72.
[69] Ibid., 296.
[70] Indeed, he kept the encomium of Francis I (*Fur*., XXIV 30-49 AB; XXVI C), written in 1515, also in the 1532 edition of the *Furioso*: see Seroni 1974; Dorigatti 2011, 37-40.

an Este courtier), at least to limit the expression of his personal opinion as much as possible – a fact which would further prove that these texts were designed for the specific ends I have previously identified.

2.5.3. Similarities with the *Furioso*

One feels that overall the political themes delineated in the canzoni are a continuation of a specific narrative that had begun already in the *Furioso*, in a famous passage, which, incidentally, contains references to *Rvf*, LIII, also a source for XLI. Here Ariosto moves from a 'hot' topic – the fact that the Holy Sepulchre was in the hands of infidels – and uses it as a pretext to denounce the contemporary political situation in which the inertia demonstrated by Italy is exacerbated by the ambitions of the foreign invaders, who, instead of cooperating in defence of their common faith, have chosen to fight against one another. The passage culminates in a hortatory apostrophe to Leo X, begging him to defend Christianity from its true enemies, the infidels:

> 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.
>
> […]
> Non hai tu, Spagna, l'Africa vicina,
> che t'ha via più di questa Italia offesa?
> e pur, per dar travaglio alla meschina,
> lasci la prima tua sì bella impresa.
> 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? (*Fur*., XV 74-76 AB; XVII C)
>
> 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.[71]
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,
sì che dai lupi il grege tuo difenda. (*Fur*., XV 79 AB; XVII C)[72]

The two canzoni, read as a couple, repeat this pattern (criticism of Italian weakness and of the war; allusion to Leo as a 'crusading pope'). The traditional imagery of the lion and the flock in 49 should be viewed as a passive reuse; just as the expression 'amato Lauro' which appears in the elogium of Lorenzo, which echoes the 'ben nato lauro' of a prologue of the first *Furioso* (XXXV 7,7 A).

In other words, it would seem that in the two canzoni Ariosto 'recycled' and redistributed materials from the workshop of the *Furioso*, adapting them to the tragic register of their new context and dressing them in a form more suited to the Roman milieu. That this proposed interpretation should be in conflict with the negative image of Rome which we garner from the *Satire*[73] does not, I believe, constitute a problem. In the first place, simply the fact that they belong to a different literary code is a sufficient explanation for this contradiction. Additionally, however, it is unlikely that in the years in which these canzoni were written, that is 1516-1518 (see below), Ariosto had yet given up hope of obtaining a benefice from the Pope,[74] whom he celebrated in the *Furioso* as an example of liberality.[75] In fact, such hopes must still have been alive in the spring of

[71] See *Rvf*, LIII 13-14: 'dormirà sempre, e non fia chi la svegli? / Le man l'avess'io avolto entro' capegli!'.
[72] As is well known, this octave substituted a passage in which the poet accused Julius II to wreak havoc with Italy. The substitution took place After Leo X's election, on the wave of the expectations raised by the new pope, who at first seemed less belligerent than his predecessor (Dorigatti 2011, 29-32).
[73] On Ariosto's views on Rome, see Crimi's commentary in Ariosto 2019; see also Romano 2000.
[74] The statement regarding the short duration of his hopes in *Sat*., VII 55-61 should be read as a literary stylization: 'Fin che de la speranza mi rimembre, / che coi fior venne e con le prime foglie, / e poi fuggì senza aspettar settembre / (venne il dì che la Chiesa fu per moglie / data a Leone, e che alle nozze vidi / a tanti amici miei rosse le spoglie; / venne a calende, e fuggì inanzi agli idi)'.
[75] Leo X is represented among those who have overcome the monster of Avarice (see Preamble). The reading of 1516 is: 'Decimo ha quel Leon scritto sul dosso, / ch'avea attaccate l'asinine orecchie' (XXIV 36, 1-2 AB); in the last version the second line is 'ch'al brutto mostro i denti ha ne l'orecchi' (XXVI 36 2

1518, the period in which satira III was written:[76] this is suggested by the contradiction that emerges between the conclusion of the satira, where the aforementioned stoic preference for poverty rather than ambition is set out, and its opening, where Ariosto complains of the poverty he suffers in the service of Alfonso I – a fact which allows us to see that such stoicism is essentially a fall-back position.[77]

But I would further argue that the Roman cultural milieu exerted a strong attraction on Ariosto, even after the definitive break had taken place. In the seventh satira (1524) Ariosto imagines that his addressee, Bonaventura Pistofilo, in order to bring him round to accepting the position as ambassador for Clement VII, describes all the advantages his Roman life would bring (118-181), among which the possibility of conversing with noble intellects would feature prominently:

> Dimmi che al Bembo, al Sadoletto, al dotto
> Iovio, al Cavallo, al Blosio, al Molza, al Vida
> potrò ogni giorno, e al Tibaldeo, far motto. (*Sat*., VII 127-129)

Although Ariosto declined the offer, his evocation of that milieu inevitably reveals, as has frequently been observed by critics, the lure it still exerted over him.[78]

C). In the first version, the attribute of donkey ears – a symbol of ignorance – for the monster could allude, according to Bigi's commentary, to Leo's liberality towards artists and literati. I believe it likely that Ariosto eliminated this detail once it was clear that he would never benefit from the Pope's support.

[76] Villa 2008, 523; Ariosto 2019, 97-98.

[77] Villa 2000, 197-199; Campeggiani 2017, 76-91; Ariosto 2019, 97-98. As highlighted by Berra in her introduction to satira VII (Ariosto 2019, 233), the human craving for material goods is one of the key themes of satirical literature, and one which Horace fully explored: Ariosto follows this thread throughout his satire, indeed, he 'segue nel suo personaggio-*alter ego* le vicende dell'appetito di ricchezze, fino al conseguimento di una parcissima misura che mette al riparo dai rovesci di fortuna' (ibid.).

[78] Jossa 2009, 87, concludes from this parade of humanists that 'l'edificazione della poesia come arte civile e della corte come luogo della poesia è dunque il vero filo conduttore delle *Satire*, prese nel loro insieme, come libro'. A similar reading was heralded in Corsaro 1979, 202; Romano 2000, 116-118. Berra proposes a different interpretation of the passage: in her opinion, the sequence hides a polemic note, since all those literati were in one way or another 'compromised' by power.

2.6. Sources and models – the two canzoni in the 'canzoniere'

As I have said before, there is no available data to fix with absolute exactness the period in which the two canzoni were written. According to Campeggiani, a post-1517 dating for 49 can be proved by a geographical reference: in the passage praising the pope's crusade, the sultan (Selim I) is described as a fugitive from Arabia and from Egypt – but these lands were in fact conquered by him in early 1517; a good number of months after Giuliano's death therefore. If, however, we accept this proposed dating, the problem of XLI still persists: was it written in parallel with 49, or (and this seems to me more probable) in the preceding year, soon after Giuliano's death?

Further questions are raised by transmission. The diptych-like structure of the texts is not in the *extravagante* tradition: while as many as eight miscellanies transmit XLI, only one, **Bg**, contains 49; however, this eighteenth-century manuscript is probably a *descriptus* from a print edition.[79] In other words, the circulation of 49 cannot be proved.

If we now look at the main tradition, we notice that XLI is in both **Vr** and **F,** but not in the *editio princeps* **Cp**, while 49 can be found in **F**, in **Mn** and in **Cp**, but not in **Vr** – a situation which Rabitti has justly described as problematic.[80] While I cannot explain the absence of XLI from **Cp** (transcribed, it should be noted, from lost autographs by Ariosto), the reason why the circulation of 49 was so much smaller or indeed null are much clearer. The canzone is of a much inferior quality, although (or perhaps because) it is more ambitious. This may be seen already in the metrical choices Ariosto made. As I said before, Ariosto was unaccustomed to manage the canzone form, and in neither case did he borrow the burdensome structure of *Alma cortese*.[81] While in XLI he chose a 'lighter' scheme (that of *Rvf*, CCLXX and CCCXXV), in 49 he tried to expand it, creating

[79] Finazzi 2002-2003, 179.
[80] Rabitti 2000, 446 footnote 28.
[81] This in turn is the same as *Rvf*, XXIII.

stanzas of 18 lines, similar to those of *Rvf*, CCLXIV.[82] He was not able, however, to stick to this structure for the whole length of the poem: from the seventh stanza, the twelfth line of each stanza (as well as the correspondent line in the envoy) is no longer a hendecasyllable but a *settenario*.[83]

Its absence from **Vr** may be accounted for by other factors. The deployment of a *gravissimo* register in two canzoni (for a total of 298 lines) would have altered the prevalently elegiac texture of the canzoniere and created an imbalance in its subject matter. If the hypothesis that Ariosto may have consulted Bembo's earliest canzoniere (see Introduction) were true, moreover, there may have been a further reason for its exclusion: the wish to imitate the 'macrotext' of the model in which *Alma cortese* stands out (as the only example of *canzone gravissima*) – towards the end of the canzoniere, in a position more or less analogous to that occupied by XLI in **Vr**.

As to XLI, according to Bozzetti, in the Rossiano codex it is 'efficacemente situata nel momento in cui il tema è quello del doloroso e ormai irrimediabile distacco dall'essere amato'.[84] It should also be pointed out that it is followed by capitolo XLII, with the male voice lamenting the illness of his beloved: the juxtaposition is made possible (albeit rather forcedly) by the dolorous content, by the theme, common to both, of the lyric I's desire for death,[85] as well as by a certain antiquarian flavour endowed on XLII by the allusions to famous characters from Roman history (see Chapter II, 4.1). The insertion of the

[82] Guidolin 2010, 69, notes an affinity in the metrical construction of these two texts ('Mostrano di riecheggiarsi oltre che mediante esplicite spie contestuali, anche grazie all'impronta metrica piuttosto simile. Gli schemi ripresi sono, infatti, per la prima quello di RVF 270 o 325 e per la seconda quello di RVF 264, cioè sagome stofiche con identica composizione e successione rimica nella fronte e con analogo attacco della sirma mediante la terna di endecasillabi CDE'). It is no coincidence that the Petrarchan schemes imitated by Ariosto all belong to canzoni *in morte* of Laura. The schemes are: ABbCBAaCCDEeDFF; DEeDFF (XLI); ABbCBAaCCDE[E/e]DdFfGG; CDEeDdFfGG (49).
[83] Finazzi 2002-2003, 296-297; Fedi 1990*bis*, 112 footnote 37.
[84] Bozzetti 1985, 96.
[85] *Rime*, XLI 70-73: 'Deh, perché tanto è questo corpo forte, / che né la lunga febre, né il tormento / che magior nel cor sento, / potesse trarlo a desiata morte'; XLII 43-45: 'Et se morir ne dee (che però vani / sieno gli auguri), di morir per lei / supplico, e al Ciel ne lievo ambe le mani'.

canzone in a canzoniere devoted to love does not, however, compromise the meaning of the poem, nor does it disrupt the significance of the original dedication to Giuliano.

If we look at the **F** branch, the fact that it contains canzone 49 proves Ariosto's wish to redeploy it in when in the final stage of his selection of his *rime*. It is interesting that this reintegration should go hand in hand with the elimination of canzone VI, and its amorous contents (see Chapter II). At this chronological juncture, Ariosto was perhaps more interested in the tragic style; but most of all, the insertion of 49 eliminated the problem of the (thematic and stylistic) isolation of XLI; it therefore acted as a strengthener of internal connections in view of a new canzoniere, but could also be seen as reinforcing a specific structural configuration, that of the diptych, which was present also elsewhere (XX and XXI, XXV and XXVII, XLIV and XLVI).

3. Capitolo XXVI (*Ne la stagion che 'l bel tempo rimena*)

The final step in this survey of Ariosto's poems referring to the Medici dynasty is capitolo XXVI, *Ne la stagion che 'l bel tempo rimena*. The circumstances of its writing are clear and present no issues, as is its dedication to Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino [86] – the nephew of Giuliano and of Leo X, and the ruler of Florence since 1513. On 21 February 1519, Ariosto had been commissioned to take a trip to Florence to express Duke Alfonso's hopes for the prompt recovery of Lorenzo, who had fallen ill with syphilis: upon his arrival (26 February) he was not granted a personal audience by Lorenzo, who was too indisposed, but by his cousin, Cardinal Giulio de' Medici (the future Pope Clement VII). On 4 May, Ariosto was sent to Florence again (he was chosen by Alfonso 'sì come […] persona nota e domestica già molto tempo a tutta la p.^{ta} ill.^{ma} casa

[86] The occasion which inspired this poem was illustrated already by Sansovino, in his 1561 commentary to the *Rime* (Ariosto 1730, II, 365).

medicea'),[87] this time to offer Alfonso's condolences on the death of Lorenzo's wife, Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne. When he arrived, however, Lorenzo himself had passed away, and Ariosto had to return to Ferrara.[88]

The capitolo is commonly dated to the period between the author's two visits to Florence.[89] In it, a female voice, the personification of Florence, laments the sickness of 'her' laurel tree: the onomastic pun on 'lauro' (Lorenzo, according to the most common reading) occurs several times throughout the poem.

> Lassa, onde uscì la boreal tempesta?
> onde la bruma? onde il rigor e il gelo?
> unde la nieve a' danni mei sì presta?
> Come gli ha tolto il suo favor il cielo,
> langue il mio lauro, et de la bella spoglia
> nudo gli resta et senza honor il stelo. (*Rime*, XXVI 31-36)

Florence is uncertain of her own survival, which in turn depends on the survival of the tree:

> Soccorran tutti i dei, tutte le dee,
> che de li arbori han cura, il lauro mio,
> però che gli è fatal: se viver dee,
> vivo io, se dee morir, seco moro io. (Ibid., 52-55)

While this lament occupies the second part of the capitolo, in the first one the female speaker remembers the growth of the tree, and the pleasure she had taken in its shadow,

> Dolci ricetti, solitarii e fidi,
> mi fur queste ombre, ove sicuro puote
> sfogarsi il cor con amorosi gridi. (Ibid., 16-18)

as well as the attraction it exerted over the gods, who preferred the meadows surrounding the tree to their own dwellings (see below).

[87] *A Ludovico Ariosto – Minuta ducale*, 1 May 1519 (quoted in Catalano 1930-1931, II, 198).
[88] Catalano 1930-1931, I, 500-501.
[89] Ibid., 502 footnote 59.

Clearly, this is a strictly occasional poem, and for this reason it has generally been neglected in critical overviews of Ariosto's poetry. It is my belief, however, that it deserves some attention and that its analysis yields some interesting findings.

3.1. Philological and historical questions

It should be first pointed out that the poem is known in two slightly different versions: that included in manuscript **C2** (and its *descriptus* **P3**), which was discovered by Bozzetti, and that included in the main tradition. Bozzetti hypothesized that the former version was the one actually presented to (or at least intended for presentation to) Lorenzo, which was later reworked by Ariosto so that it could be included in his canzoniere: this point has also been confirmed by Finazzi. Bozzetti also argued that its inclusion in **Vr** entailed the distortion of the two protagonists, no longer recognizable as Florence and Lorenzo but rather, as per tradition, a female lyric voice lamenting her beloved's illness.[90] This is, according to the scholar, proved by the reduction of the occurrences of the pun on 'lauro' in the final version.[91]

Bozzetti's interpretation is overall tenable, except for the fact that, as demonstrated by Finazzi, he made a mistake in the collation: what Ariosto did was simply redistribute the allusions to the 'lauro', without reducing their number.[92] As a matter of fact, the relation of the poem to the Medici was probably unmissable for contemporary readers, as was the allusion to the colours of the Medici family crest (white, blue, red and gold) at the outset of the poem:

> Ne la stagion che 'l bel tempo rimena
> di mia man posi un ramuscel di lauro
> a mezzo colle, in una piaggia amena

[90] The illness of the (usually female) beloved one is a common motif in Quattrocento canzonieri, as confirmed by the survey of Comboni-Zanato 2017.
[91] Bozzetti 1985, 98-99.
[92] Finazzi 2002-2003, 127 footnote 225; 245-246.

che di bianco, d'azur, vermiglio et auro
fioriva sempre, e sempre il sol scopriva,
o fusse a l'indo o fusse al lito mauro. (*Rime,* XXVI 1-6)

That Ariosto dedicated a poem to Lorenzo may appear odd to the modern reader. According to the sources, there really seemed to be nothing admirable about Lorenzo, whom the Florentine people hated and feared, as he had acquired more official positions than had ever been allowed to any other Florentine citizen (including that of Captain-General of the city).[93] Ariosto, who was aware of this situation, painted a harshly negative portrait of him in an early version of satira III: recalling his own past friendship with Leo X, he evokes the period of the Medici exile, 'quando le scarpe rotte e il palandrano / senza alcun pelo e il ventre mal satollo / facean quel ch'or non è, Lorenzo umano'. These lines were deleted and in their place is an allusion to Giuliano, which mentions the court of Urbino, where the family had been welcomed: 'ove col formator del cortigiano, / col Bembo e gli altri sacri al divo Appollo, / [Giuliano] facea l'essilio suo men duro e strano' (*Sat.*, III 91-93). The dynamics of this substitution led Debenedetti to think that Ariosto particularly associated the 'inhumanity' of Lorenzo to his unfair dispossession of the Duchy of Urbino.[94] Another possible allusion to Lorenzo is in satira IV, in which the poet mentions a ruler under the sobriquet of 'Laurino', to whom he attributes cruel crimes.[95] This passage is controversial: although most critics, starting from Debenedetti himself, think that this figure must be identified as Lorenzo, others believe that Ariosto was alluding instead to Cardinal Giulio de' Medici.[96] Be this as it may, Ariosto certainly

[93] Najemy 2006, 427-430.
[94] Debenedetti 1944, 119-120. The variants of satira III have recently been re-examined in Campeggiani 2017, 91-100.
[95] *Sat.*, IV 94-102: 'Laurin si fa de la sua patria capo, / et in privato il publico converte; / tre ne confina, a sei ne taglia il capo; / comincia volpe, indi con forze aperte / escie leon, poi c'ha 'l popul sedutto / con licenze, con doni e con offerte: / l'iniqui alzando, e deprimendo in lutto / li buoni, acquista titolo di saggio, / di furti, stupri e d'omicidi brutto'.
[96] Catalano 1930-1931, I, 501-503; Simonetta 2017. A discussion is in Ariosto 2019, 147 footnote 70.

agreed with the general contempt for Lorenzo – a creation of Leo X, without any apparent personal merit.

In this light, one may wonder why Ariosto held on, throughout his life, to a poem that paid homage to such a personage, and whose origin is clearly perceivable in spite of his attempt of 'recycling' it in the very different context of **Vr**.

Several reasons may have existed for this. First, Ariosto must have wanted to increase the 'occasional' material of the canzoniere, in order not to leave canzone XLI isolated.[97] Another reason may have been its connection with a set of prestigious references, which have so far escaped literary critics: these may perhaps shed new light on the part played by this poem in Ariosto's lyrical production, and shall be illustrated in the next sections.

3.2. Capitolo XXVI and the Medici villa in Poggio a Caiano

In 1972 art historians Kliemann and Winner both independently reached the conclusion that capitolo XXVI presents a connection with a section of the fresco decoration in the 'Salone di Leone X', in the Medici villa of Poggio a Caiano. As is well known, the building of the villa was commissioned by the former Lorenzo, the Magnifico, around 1480; the works were halted when the Medici were exiled, later to be resumed at the initiative of Leo X, and under the supervision of Cardinal Giulio (1513-1520).[98] In their plans, the villa was to relive as a symbol of the regained prestige of the dynasty; this significance was especially highlighted in the 'Salone di Leone X', whose decorations –

[97] If the hypothesis that Ariosto consulted Bembo's canzoniere **VM**$_5$ is true, one could also argue that he kept the capitolo on account of a relative affinity (in the imagery of the branch, of the frond, of the shade) with a sonnet of that compilation (*Le rime*, 28), which homages Galeotto Franciotti della Rovere. The text is: 'De la gran quercia che 'l bel Tebro adombra / esce un ramo et ha tanto i cieli amici, / che gli honorati sette colli aprici / et tutto 'l fiume di vaghezza ingombra. / Questi m'è tal, che pur la sua dolce ombra / far pote i giorni miei lieti et felice, / et ha sì nel mio cor le sue radici, / che né forza né tempo indi lo sgombra. / Pianta gentil, ne le cui sacre fronde / s'annida la mia speme e' miei desiri, / te non offenda mai caldo né gelo, / et tanto humor ti dian la terra et l'onde, / et l'aura intorno sì soave spiri, / che t'ergan sovr'ogni altra infino al cielo'.

[98] On the villa, see Bardazzi-Brandinelli-Castellani 1981; Foster 1992.

entrusted to Pontormo, Franciabigio and Andrea del Sarto – alluded to the core concept of those years' propaganda: the return of the Golden Age. Work on these decorations began in 1519, probably in autumn (though the exact month is much debated): the most famous of these paintings, Pontormo's lunette, was also the first to be realized, and is precisely this one that is related to Ariosto's capitolo.

There are evident correspondences between text and work of art. In the capitolo, four gods – Diana, Bacchus, Vertumnus and Pomona – are mentioned, together with minor deities, as protectors of the tree:

> Spesso Diana con le nimphe accanto
> l'arbuscel süavissimo prepose
> a le selve de Eurota et d'Erimanto. (*Rime*, XXVI 25-27)

> Concedi Bacco, Vertunno et Pomona
> satiri, fauni, dryade et napee,
> che nuove frondi il lauro mio repona. (Ibid., 49-51)

The gods Vertumnus and Pomona, who feature in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (XIV 622-697; 765-769) but rarely in the Italian tradition, fit the Medici imagery well, both on account of their Etruscan origin,[99] and because Vertumnus traditionally symbolized the changing seasons and was thus the ideal choice to convey the concept of restoration. According to Vasari's testimony,[100] Vertumnus, Pomona and Diana appear in Pontormo's lunette; Vasari remains crucial for the modern interpretation of the work (although scholars disagree on which figure should be identified as each of these gods).[101]

Furthermore, towards the end of the poem the speaker-Florence invites all the rustic gods to take care of the laurel tree: 'Soccorran tutti i dei, tutte le dee, / che li arbori han

[99] As the speaker in an elegy by Propertius (IV 2), Vertumnus says: 'Tuscus ego et Tuscis orior' (2).
[100] Vasari 1966-1987, 318-319: 'Onde avendo a fare un Vertunno coi suoi agricultori, fece un villano che siede con un pennato in mano, tanto bello e ben fatto che è cosa rarissima, come anco sono certi putti che vi sono, oltre ogni credenza vivi e naturali. Dall'altra banda, facendo Pomona e Diana con altre Dee, le aviluppò di panni […]'.
[101] Besides Kliemann 1972 and Winner 1972, see also Strunck 1999 and its bibliography.

cura, il lauro mio' (*Rime,* XXVI 52-53). This is a quotation from Virgil's *Georgics* (I 21: 'diique deaeque omnes, studium quibus arva tueri'), the second hemistich of which also appears in Pontormo's lunette: similarly, the optative mood, 'soccorran', finds a correspondence in the Latin word 'Utinam' inscribed in a banner lifted by a putto in the fresco.

On these grounds, the conclusion of both Kliemann 1972 and Winner 1972 is that Paolo Giovio, who according to Vasari planned the salone's iconographic design, took inspiration from Ariosto's capitolo – and additionally turned its basic idea into a more optimistic view: indeed, the decorations are clearly meant to transmit a message of hope, in spite of Lorenzo's recent death at the time of their execution.

To this historical framework I will add a further point which has escaped critical attention. It is worth pointing out that Ariosto's first visit to Lorenzo (February 1519) took place not in Florence, as Catalano writes, but rather in the villa of Poggio a Caiano, in which both Lorenzo and Giulio had just settled.[102] Indeed, it was from here that the letter sent by Giulio to Duke Alfonso soon after Ariosto's visit was written, and a reference to the villa may also be found in the letter of Pier Antonio Torelli (the Ferrarese ambassador in Florence, who accompanied Ariosto) also to the Duke.[103]

Interestingly, Ariosto's visit to the villa may have left a trace in the capitolo. Indeed, the first six lines (see above) refer to a place in the middle of a hill: 'a mezzo colle, in una piaggia amena' (the villa is positioned along the slope of the hill of Montalbano); the lines

[102] Lorenzo had moved to Poggio a Caiano just a few days before Ariosto's visit, 19 February (Corsini 1913, 75). Upon his cousin's illness, Cardinal Giulio had to leave Rome and to move first to Florence, then to the villa, where he stayed until April 1519 (Prosperi 1982, 242).

[103] Quoted in Catalano 1930-1931, II, 193-194. Giulio's letter is dated 'Ex Podio Chayani XXVI Februari 1519'. Torelli's letter reads: 'Ill.^{mo} et E.^{mo} Sig. mio ob.^{mo}: questa mattina nel Poggio monstrai la lettera de V. S. […] de quanto qui occurre darà particular notitia il mag.^{co} m. Ludovico de tutto assai bene instructo'. In a letter of 21 February, Duke Alfonso explicitly asked Torelli to accompany Ariosto: 'Noi mandamo a posta m. L.^{co} Ariosto nostro gentilhuomo a visitare Mons. R.^{mo} de Medici, lo Illu.^{mo} et Ex.^{o} S.^{or} Duca d'Urbino […] et a far lor quelle offerte che ricercar l'antica amicitia che è stata tra la lor felicissima casa et la nostra et che ora è tra noi. Volemo et vi commettemo che gli facciate compagnia per tutto […]' (ibid., 192-193).

also mention the colours of the Medici crest, which, besides being visible on a number of public buildings of Florence (which were, according to Kliemann, possible inputs for Ariosto)[104] is painted all throughout the vault of the first-floor loggia of the villa (this belongs to the earliest stage of decoration). Furthermore, the overall pastoral colouring of the poem is perfectly in keeping with the 'idyllic' environment of Poggio a Caiano, which had also inspired a poemetto by his owner the Magnifico himself, as well as an erudite Latin *silva* by Poliziano.[105]

Arguably, therefore, not only did Ariosto inspire the decoration of the villa, but he was himself inspired by it. He was received by Cardinal Giulio, the main overseer of the works, and a man of fine artistic sensitivity:[106] we may guess that the Cardinal showed him around, that Ariosto saw the walls yet to be painted, and that the two had a conversation about the possible subjects for the decoration. Had the iconographic design of the lunette already been planned by Giovio at that time, and did Ariosto draw on it? – in other words, should the chronological relationship hypothesized by Kliemann and Winner be inverted? Alternatively, did Giulio commission the poem to Ariosto specifically for that purpose – namely, as a starting point for the iconographic programme? Or did the capitolo originate entirely from Ariosto's personal initiative, without him predicting any future use of it on Giovio's part?

It is difficult to provide a satisfactory answer to these questions, especially because, as I said before, the precise date on which the decoration started is unknown. What is instead possible, through a closer reading of the poem that takes into consideration this historical

[104] Kliemann 1972, 311 footnote 75.
[105] See Lorenzo de' Medici, *Ambra* (*Descriptio hiemis*) and Poliziano, *Ambra*, in *Silvae*, 101-164. Both take inspiration from 'L'Ambra', an old villa in Poggio a Caiano that Lorenzo had bought from the Rucellai, in which he lived while the new villa was being built (therefore, the two villas must not be mistaken for one another). Lorenzo's poemetto recounts (from octave 22) the aetiological story of the nymph Ambra, pursued by the river god Ombrone and turned by Diana into stone. Poliziano's *silva*, which served as a *prolusione* to a course he taught on Homer, celebrates the place in the final lines (590-625), also alluding to the new villa under construction.
[106] On Giulio's supervisions of the artistic works at the villa, see Reiss 1992, 463-486.

framework, is to formulate hypotheses as to the role this poem had in Ariosto's lyric output.

3.3. The Medici iconography

As a matter of fact, Kliemann and Winner propose an untraditional reading, by suggesting (the former more explicitly than the latter) that the 'lauro' may symbolize not Lorenzo, but rather the Medici dynasty as a whole –[107] an interpretation that, incidentally, neutralizes the hypothesis that the poem was written before Lorenzo's death: indeed, it implies that the speaker is not grieving for Lorenzo, but for the weakness of the dynasty; such grief made even more sense after Lorenzo's death (a fact which effectively threatened the household, since his male heirs, Alessandro and Ippolito, were illegitimate).[108] While it is true that the laurel traditionally symbolized Lorenzo, and was also adopted by Ariosto with this meaning in the *Furioso* and in canzone 49 (both referring to the Magnifico; see above), in the specific case of capitolo XXVI I tend to agree with the two scholars.

In post-1512 Medici propaganda, the symbol of the laurel did, it is true, identify the Magnifico and his government, but at the same time it also figured the present time, which was seen as a renewal of that earlier time whose loss all lamented. The image of the regeneration of the laurel, together with that of the return to the Golden Age, therefore became popular, as may be seen in the following sonnet, included in a printed edition that appeared immediately after the Medici restoration:

Quel glorioso excelso et verde Lauro
sotto l'ombr del qual fiorì Fiorenza

[107] Kliemann 1972, 306 footnote, 311-312; Winner 1972, 178.
[108] At ll. 37-39, the speaker also alludes to an heir of Lorenzo: 'Verdeggia un ramo sol con poca foglia, / et fra tema et speranza sto suspesa / se mi lo lasci il verno, o mi lo toglia'. We may identify the symbol of the twig either as Ippolito, Giuliano's son, or as Lorenzo's daughter Caterina (whose birth caused her mother's death, which was shortly after followed by that of her husband).

manchando per comun fatal sentenza,
surgon sue piante et torna lieta d'auro.
Godi hor Fiorenza d'un tanto restauro!
per lor forteza et lungha patienza
ritorna in te la pristina excellenza
qual fia formosa ancor dall'Indo al Mauro.
Et che sia ver: nella fredda stagione
l'arbor tagliato ho viso in primavera
far maggior fronde et fructi el suo troncone.
Così di allor le fronde et virtù vera
pullular veggio sceptro et tre chorone
e 'n fino al ciel salir l'ultima spera.[109]

Once Lorenzo 'The Younger' gained power over Florence, this network of symbols became more rooted: indeed, the future Duke of Urbino appropriated the political symbols of his namesake grandfather, in an attempt to reproduce the climate that had characterized the latter's rule. Lorenzo also chose the Golden Age as the main theme for the parade of his 'Compagnia del Broncone', during the 1513 carnival; the so-called 'broncone' was an *impresa* he borrowed from the Magnifico (and adapted to his own requirements), consisting in a sawn trunk of laurel tree that shoots new leaves.[110]

In this light, I would like to suggest that the 'lauro' of Ariosto's capitolo is precisely the 'broncone': it identifies not merely Lorenzo, but the Medici dynasty reborn through Lorenzo – and not long after once more ailing. Indeed, Ariosto is clearly echoing the imagery I have just illustrated. Some striking correspondences may be detected with the sonnet quoted above;[111] in particular, the eleventh line of the sonnet can be compared with XXVI 11-12: 'fei sì con studio et con assidua cura / che 'l lauro hebbe radice e nuova fronda'. It is precisely this new frond that should be identified as Lorenzo the Younger,

[109] Quoted in Ridolfi 1949, 29.
[110] See Cox-Rearick 1982; Bausi 1992.
[111] See the metaphor of the 'cold season' in the tercets, intending a period of political crisis (and see *Rime*, XXVI 31-33). The expression 'dall'Indo al Mauro' is also used in a nearly identical way. This is a Petrarchan syntagm (*Rvf*, CCLXIX 1-4: 'Rotta è l'alta colonna e 'l verde lauro / che facean ombra al mio stanco pensero; / perduto ò quel che ritrovar non spero / dal borrea a l'austro, o dal mar indo al mauro') often imitated during the Renaissance. See also *Fur*., XXXVIII 86 A; XXXVII 89 B; XLII 89,3-4 C: 'nominata sarà da l'Indo al Mauro, / e da l'austrine all'iperboree case'.

while the 'ramuscel di lauro' of l. 2 may allude to the first blossoming of the dynasty under the Magnifico.

The theme of the Golden Age is moreover echoed (through an ambiguous expression, which may also denote springtime), in the very first line of his capitolo, 'Ne la stagion che 'l bel tempo rimena': this seems a faithful quotation of Lorenzo's motto 'Le temps revient'.[112] The invocation to Apollo ('Phebo, rettor de li superni segni', 46) is also significant: it should be remembered that one of the major literary references for the Medici propaganda, Virgil's eclogue IV, sets the return of the Golden Age as taking place under Apollo's rule.[113]

I shall also note that he personification of Florence ('Florentia'/ 'Flora') under the laurel tree appeared, at the time of Lorenzo il Magnifico, in a medal of c. 1480,[114] as well as in the following excerpts from two famous works by Pulci and Poliziano, written to celebrate the Medici jousts:

> Il campo è paonazzo d'una banda,
> dall'altra è bianco, e presso a uno alloro
> colei che per exempro il ciel ci manda
> delle bellezze dello etterno coro,
> ch'avea tessuta mezza una grillanda,
> vestita tutta azurro e be' fior d'oro;
> e era questo alloro parte verde,
> e parte, secco, già suo valor perde. (Pulci, *La giostra*, LXV)

> Et tu ben nato Laur, sotto el cui velo
> Fiorenza lieta in pace si riposa
> né teme i venti o 'l minacciar del cielo
> o Giove irato in vista più crucciosa (Poliziano, *Stanze per la giostra*, I 4)[115]

[112] Cox-Rearick 1982, 183-184.
[113] Ibid., 184.
[114] See ibid., 181.
[115] As for the post-1512 revival of this image, the *Lauretum*, a printed collection of poems (probably from 1516) celebrating the younger Lorenzo, should be mentioned. See the following examples: 'Evenit hoc Lauri sub tegmine, facta beata / cuius felici es nominis auspicio. / Dumque viret Laurus, florens, Florentia, fama es, […]' (*Severus Minervius Florentiam alloquitur*, 9-11); 'Spes erat in Lauro Lauri post funera semper: / mansit ut in sola virgine certa fides, / sed modo cum surgat Lauri de germine Laurus / celsior, insurgit spes quoque nostra virens […]' (*Barthol. Reguleus de Magnifico Laurentio*, 1-4).

3.4. A connection with Petrarch

Clearly the symbol of the 'lauro', in addition to alluding to the name of Lorenzo, highlighted the flourishing of the arts that the Magnifico (whose identification with the sun god Apollo[116] was a commonplace) promoted. Actually, the laurel tree inescapably reminds us of Petrarch, whose mentions of 'Laura' bring about a network of symbols for the poetic glory he coveted (and the image I have just mentioned, the shadow of the laurel tree, is also found in *Rvf*, XXX 1: 'Giovene donna sotto un verde lauro').

In particular, as Winner shows,[117] Ariosto drew on the tenth eclogue of Petrarch's *Bucolicum carmen*, entitled *Laurea occidens*.[118] In it Silvanus (Petrarch's literary alter ego) remembers how he once fell in love with a laurel tree, and undertook a long journey in order to learn how to take care of it worthily. During this journey he met several Greek and Latin poets, and by the time he returned, his laurel tree had grown and had become so beautiful as to attract the gods and the aspiring poets. Silvanus himself learnt to write poetry, and obtained the 'laurel crown' from king Robert of Naples (here called 'Argus'). Soon after, however, the winds uprooted the tree, leaving him in desperation. At this point, Silvanus's interlocutor, Socrates (Petrarch's friend Ludwig van Kempen), consoles him by telling him that the tree has not died, but has been uprooted by the gods, who have replanted it in the Elysian fields, where it is now germinating again. The text presents a double level of interpretation (already highlighted in its earliest commentary by Benvenuto da Imola):[119] it alludes to Laura's death by the plague, but it also alludes to

[116] Cox-Rearick 1982, *passim*.
[117] Winner 1973, 177-178.
[118] A separate edition of this eclogue (and the one from which I am quoting) is Petrarch 1968; the most recent complete edition of the *Bucolicum carmen* is Petrarch 2001.
[119] The *Bucolicum carmen*, with the commentary by Benvenuto, was printed in Venice in 1503 (Cascio 2016, 128 footnote); Ariosto could probably consult this edition.

the fall of the 'earthly' myth of glory, which has crumbled before the greater urgency of higher aims.[120]

There are precise similarities between this eclogue and Ariosto's capitolo: in the theme of the speaker's first tender care for the laurel tree,[121] and especially in the representation of its growth, and of the gods leaving their dwellings to take delight in the plant (emphasis in the lines below is mine):

> Fu sì benigna a' miei desir natura
> che la tenera verga crescer vidi
> e divenir solida pianta et dura. (*Rime,* XXVI 13-15)

> *Vener* lasciando l'alte sedie vote
> del sacro *Idalio* e lungi da li odori
> che fuman l'are di Sabei devote,[122]
> sovente con le Gracie in lieti chori
> vi danzò intorno; et per li rami in tanto
> salian scherzando i pargoletti amori.
> Spesso *Diana* con le nimphe accanto
> l'arbuscel süavissimo prepose
> a le selve de *Eurota* et d'Erimanto. (Ibid., 19-27)

> SIL. […] sic illa parentis
> nature et nostro fuerat suffulta favore,
> ut neque Dodonam, nec Cretam Iupiter illi,
> nec *Venus Ydaliam* aut Amathum, *Eurotamque Dyana,*
> nec Delon Cirramque suam preferret Apollo. (*Laurea occidens,* 351-355)

The final section of the poem, with the speaker's lament (*Rime,* XXVI 31-42; see above), also echoes Silvanus's description of the eradication of the tree:

> pestifer hinc eurus, hinc humidus irruit auster;
> ac, stratis late arboribus, mea gaudia laurum
> extirpant […]
> Hei michi! Quo nunc fessus eam? Quibus anxius umbris

[120] This is the reading of Fenzi 2015, 18.
[121] *Rime,* XXVI 7-10: 'Quivi trahendo hor per herbosa riva, / hor rorando con man la tepida onda, / hor rimovendo la gleba nativa, / hor riponendo più più lieta et feconda'; *Laurea occidens,* 36-37: 'Laurea culta michi, nec me situs asper et horrens / arcuit incepto'.
[122] Ariosto reworked this tercet in **F**, also changing the rhyming words. The new version of l. 21, 'di Gnido e d'*Amathunte* e de' Sabei', also maintains the link with Petrarch's eclogue ('Amathum', 354).

> recreer, aut ubi iam senior nova carmina cantem? (*Laurea occidens*, 381-386)

I should now draw my conclusions. In the capitolo Ariosto brings together very different themes and inspirations that are in line with the taste of the Medici: the 'broncone', Vertumnus and Pomona, the quotation from the *Georgics* (bucolic poetry was much favoured in Florence, especially in the age of the Magnifico), and the allusion to the Golden Age. The ability to combine such a variety of Medici-related material may have been the result of his personal readings (which almost certainly included the poetry by Lorenzo il Magnifico), but also of his frequent journeys to Florence, and possibly also of the ideas suggested to him by his many interlocutors connected to the family. It is undoubtedly an elaborately contrived work that shows, in my opinion, how as late as 1519 Ariosto wasted no opportunity to achieve some recognition among the Medici, despite the rapid deterioration of the political relationships between Florence and Ferrara. It should not be forgotten that between Ariosto's two visits to Lorenzo, and more precisely on Carnival Sunday (6 March) of 1519, his comedy *I Suppositi* was staged in the Palazzo Apostolico of Rome. Leo X was so greatly impressed and amused by it as to ask Ariosto for a new comedy to be staged during the Carnival of 1520. To this purpose, Ariosto returned to and completed *Il Negromante*, a play he had started writing many years before. As is well known, something must have gone wrong, because the comedy was never staged: critics generally agree that the reason for this was the insinuating criticism that underpinned much of the play, and which extended as far as to touch on the practice of indulgences.[123] This fact, however, does not contradict what has been stated so far: it would have been unthinkable (all critics agree on this point) for Ariosto to play his cards

[123] Explicit anticlerical attacks were mostly introduced in the second version (1529), which was aimed at a Ferrarese audience.

so badly in the only papal commission he ever received. It is more likely that some *gaffe* was committed; perhaps papal sympathy was alienated by some excessive concession to the 'carnivalesque' element in the comedy (or even by the involuntary appearance of some private sentiment).[124]

But to return to our main point, I think capitolo XXVI may have been written hot on the heels of the success of the *Suppositi* and that its aim was to further display the poet's talent, this time in the field of lyric poetry: exactly as had happened in the case of the two canzoni.

On the basis on this, if we re-examine the hypotheses on the reasons behind the inclusion in **Vr** and in **F**, we may now add the height of style conferred to it by its Petrarchan and Humanistic fashion, and its close links with Poggio a Caiano, the site of the *otium* of the Magnifico – and as such, a place endowed with exceptional cultural prestige, which most certainly exerted great fascination on Ariosto.

Lastly, I should note that Winner believed that the speaker of the capitolo may be identified as either 'Florentia', or the personification of poetry.[125] I cannot say whether Ariosto intentionally deployed (as Petrarch did) this double level of meaning; nevertheless, the symbol of the laurel automatically echoed the activity of poetry. It is not surprising, therefore, that Ariosto should wish to preserve a work so rich in noble allusions and echoes, despite its less than exceptional literary quality.

4. Conclusion

In these poems Ariosto drew on a range of literary references connected to the family which at the time held cultural and political supremacy, and whose main centres of power,

[124] Campeggiani 2017, 80-91 has recently returned on this matter, also providing previous bibliographic references.
[125] Winner 1973, 178.

Florence and Rome, drew artists and literati from everywhere. They reveal his ambition to be recognized by poetical circles wider than the court of Ferrara: in this sense I think, therefore, that an analysis of them may serve to nuance the self-portrait that emerges from the *Satire*.

Concomitantly, their stylistic examination enriches the conclusions reached in the preceding chapters. While in the latter I have highlighted Ariosto's adherence to the courtly cultural milieu, I believe these poems display his attempt to move beyond this taste, by deploying on the one hand an 'antiquarian' tradition, and on the other, contemporary trends which themselves promoted such a literary reuse.

Conclusion

In a 1976 contribution, reworked in 1990 so as to integrate a mention of Bozzetti's recent discovery, Roberto Fedi accurately described Ariosto's lyric poetry as a sort of compromise between the Bembian and the 'courtly' versions of Petrarchism – a view which he supported through the stylistic analysis of a number of poems:

> La lirica "toscana" del ferrarese […] Ariosto, così diversa da quella generosamente cittadina del Boiardo […], sembra isolarsi, nella memoria dell'ambiente estense fra Quattrocento e Cinquecento, per alcuni suoi specifici caratteri distintivi, che ancora tengono dei modi tipici della scuola curtense, ma già sfiorano con decisione la motivazione più universalistica della poesia del nuovo secolo […].[1]

The findings of this thesis, I believe, may further reinforce this position, inasmuch as I have attempted to illustrate some of the most 'modern' features of the lyrics on the level of style, but also the elements which link them to the late-Quattrocento tradition (the latter being facilitated by some recent studies of that repertoire, in particular Comboni-Zanato 2017).

At the same time, however, I have also tried to widen this perspective, by considering Ariosto not only as an heir of a vernacular trend established by Petrarch, but also as a continuator, in the vernacular, of multiple traditions which – from classical antiquity to his own times – had used Latin as their medium. This interpretation of Ariosto-the-lyric poet (in line with that of Carrai, who describes his style as a 'petrarchismo irrobustito dal

[1] Fedi 1990*bis*, 87-88.

connubio con generi e forme di tradizione classica e umanistica')[2] is authorized by several formal and thematic features: among these may be mentioned his extensive use of elegiac situations, his integration of themes which would not be allowed in the context of a rigorous imitation of Petrarch (such as the erotic), and the displaying of echoes of the contemporary Humanistic discussions. Although these classic/Humanistic influences may in turn have been mediated by vernacular poets (whose indebtedness to classical sources is now acknowledged: see the case of Boiardo), one perceives an effort on Ariosto's part to clearly signal his poetry's direct link to its classical sources. This is achieved by adopting 'classicizing' rhetorical devices and faithful quotations, and through a network of images and situations that are clearly inspired by a specific model, but hybridized with Petrarchan motifs and aimed at achieving a personal form of 'classicismo volgare'. This quest must be seen as the lyric counterpart of Ariosto's process of renovation – which followed a similar classical template – of other literary forms: the comedy, the satira, and the narrative.

Focusing more specifically on the contents, we may note in Ariosto's most accomplished lyrics – in addition to this rich network of influences – a tendency to feature the 'real world' that surrounds him. This is visible, first of all, in the poems that hint at events of his life and in those whose dedicatee may be identified as an actual person, i.e. Alessandra Benucci: in all these cases, it should be observed that, although a specific occasion for their composition may be pinpointed, their meaning, unlike with that poetry generally labelled as *poesia occasionale*, generally transcends those circumstances. In addition to the poems in which such 'autobiographical' inspiration may be felt, however, other lyrics may be identified which engage with the poet's contemporaneity, in the sense that they reflect both the contemporary cultural framework and some hotly debated

[2] Carrai 2000, 392.

specific issues. I have tried to highlight this aspect in my analysis of Ariosto's female portraits, of his ways in which he fashions the love relationship, and of the snapshots he offers of intellectual and/or social dynamics and relations (e.g. his description of *imprese*, the homage to his lord, his answers to his poetic interlocutors).

The characteristics I have outlined are applicable generally to most of Ariosto's lyrics, but to a different extent in single cases. Indeed, Ariosto's lyrics testify to his effort (distributed over a long period of time) to make his mark with a 'personal' style while also staying up to date on the trends that were taking shape in such a crucial period in the evolution of lyric poetry. The irregular outcomes of this effort (of which Ariosto himself was aware, since he never authorized his lyrics to be printed and even tried, late in his life, to prevent their circulation), and the fact that the *rime* did not gain him the popularity that he enjoyed during his lifetime as the author of the *Furioso* and of the comedies, should not lead us to think that Ariosto ascribed to them a secondary importance. Various elements may be seen as testifying to his ambition: his participation in the *tenzone* of the 'Compagnia degli Amici', the adhesion to a poetic code that aimed at eschewing regionalisms (outstanding is the case of his imitation/reworking of *Alma cortese*), and his attempt to adopt the form of the canzoniere. To what extent he may have conceived of his lyric poetry as a 'public' output, which he hoped might gain him recognition among his fellow literati, is hard to determine: this issue, in turn, is linked to that of the actual circulation of the individual lyrics, which may be solved only if new documents are found. I believe (and I have tried to show), however, that some hints scattered in various poems (e.g. the canzoni in death of Giuliano, the poems probably in dialogue with those by Ercole Strozzi, and several elegiac capitoli) seem to imply a public proper, or at least a circle of interlocutors: thereby, Fedi's statement that the lyrics were a 'privato

controcanto lirico' to the *Furioso* may be partly corrected.[3] It is clear, at any rate, that the lyrics were originally conceived as individual pieces, fragments, and would never achieve (despite Ariosto's gestures in this sense) the status of a cohesive work such as the *Furioso* and the *Satire*: while, therefore, we may suppose that some individual poems were more publicly circulated or read, it is important to remember that it was not to the lyrics that Ariosto wished to entrust his public image, at least not in his mature years.

My analysis of the *rime*, therefore, demonstrates that also in the lyric genre Ariosto actively tried to achieve technical mastery, and looked for potential paths of innovations and originality: I believe these facts significantly enrich our knowledge of Ariosto, contributing to a better contextualization of his work in the intellectual framework of his time, but also shedding new light on his own perception of the boundaries between different poetic genres.

[3] Fedi 1990*bis*, 85.

Appendix. Conversion between the numbering of Fatini's edition of the *rime* and that of Finazzi's edition

FINAZZI	FATINI-SEGRE	OPENING LINE
I	Son. XXIV	*O messaggi del cor, sospiri ardenti*
II	Son. VIII	*Del mio pensier, che così veggio audace*
III	Son. XXII	*Quando muovo le luci a mirar voi*
IV	Mad. II	*Quando vostra beltà, vostro valore*
V	**Mad. V	*Oh, se quanto è l'ardore*
VI	Canz. II	*Quante fiate io miro*
VII	Son. IX	*La rete fu di queste fila d'oro*
VIII	**Mad. III	*Amor, io non potrei*
IX	Son. XXV	*Madonna sète bella et bella tanto*
X	**Mad. VI	*Se voi così mirasse alla mia fede*
XI	Son. X	*Com'esser può che degnamente io lodi*
XII	Son. VII	*Uno arbuscel che 'n le solinghe rive*
XIII	Son. XV	*Altri lodan il viso, altri le chiome*
XIV	Son. XVIII	*Quel capriol che, con invidia et sdegno*
XV	Son. XII	*Non fu qui dove Amor tra riso et giuoco*
XVI	**Mad. IV	*Per gran vento che spire*
XVII	Son. XX	*Chiuso era il sol da un tenebroso velo*
XVIII	Son. III	*O sicuro, secreto et fidel porto*
XIX	Son. XIII	*Aventuroso carcere soave*
XX	Cap. VII	*Forza è ch'al fine scopra et che si veggia*
XXI	Cap. VIII	*O più che 'l giorno a me lucida et chiara*
XXII	Cap. IX	*O ne' miei danni più che 'l giorno chiara*
XXIII	Cap. XII	*O lieta piaggia, o solitaria valle*
XXIV	Cap. XIII	*Qual son, qual sempre fui, tal esser voglio*
XXV	Cap. XIV	*De sì calloso dosso et sì robusto*
XXVI	Cap. III	*Ne la stagion che 'l bel tempo rimena*
XXVII	Cap. IV	*De la mia negra penna in fregio d'oro*
XXVIII	Cap. VI	*Era candido il corvo, et fatto nero*
XXIX	Cap. V	*Meritamente hora punir mi veggio*
XXX	Cap. XI	*Gentil città, che con felici auguri*
XXXI	Cap. XV	*Ben è dura et crudel, se non si piega*
XXXII	Son. II	*Mal si compensa, ahi lasso, un breve sguardo*
XXXIII	Son. XVI	*Deh, voless'io quel che voler devrei!*
XXXIV	Son. XVII	*Occhi miei belli, mentre ch'i' vi miro*
XXXV	Son. IV	*Perché simil' le siano et de li artigli*
XXXVI	Son. XIV	*Quando prima i crin d'oro et la dolcezza*
XXXVII	**Mad. VII	*A che più strali, Amor, s'io mi ti rendo?*
XXXVIII	Son. XIX	*Madonna, io mi pensai che 'l stare absente*
XXXIX	Son. XXXI	*Se con speranza di mercé perduti*

XL	Son. I	*Perché, Fortuna, quel che Amor mi ha dato*
XLI	Canz. IV	*Spirto gentil, che sei nel terzo giro*
XLII	Cap. XVII	*O qual tu sia nel cielo, a chi concesso*
XLIII	Cap. X	*Del bel numero vostro havrete un manco*
XLIV	Cap. XIX	*Piaccia a cui piace, et chi lodar vuol lodi*
XLV	Cap. XVI	*O vera o falsa che la fama suone*
XLVI	Cap. XVIII	*Chi pensa quanto il bel disio d'amore*
XLVII	Son. VI	*Non senza causa il giglio e l'amaranto*
XLVIII	Son. XXIII	*Come creder debbo io che tu in ciel oda*
49	Canz. V	*Anima eletta, che nel mondo folle*
50	Canz. I	*Non so s'io potrò ben chiudere in rima*
51	Son. XXVI	*Aventurosa man, beato ingegno*
52	Son. XXVIII	*Qual avorio di Gange, o qual di Paro*
53	Son. XXVII	*Son questi i nodi d'or, questi i capelli*
54	Son. XXIX	*Qual volta io penso a quelle fila d'oro*
55	Son. XXX	*Giorno a me sol più che la notte oscuro*
56	Son. XXI	*Qui fu dove il bel crin già con sì stretti*
57	Mad. I	*Se mai cortese fusti*
58*	Son. V	*Felice stella, sotto ch'il sol nacque*
59*	Son. XI	*Benché 'l martir sia periglioso et grave*
60*	Son. XXXII	*Lasso, i miei giorni lieti e le tranquille*

** These are in fact ballate.

Rime *extravaganti* newly discovered by Finazzi:[1]

(1) – *"Amor"! "Che vòi?" "Ragion." "Da cui la vòi?"* (capitolo)
(2) – *Benignio Serristor, dolce Guidetto* (sonnet)
(3) – *Deh, perché non è in voi tanta pietade* (ballata)
(4) – *Se questa parte ch'hanno i miei pensieri* (ballata)
(5) – *Spinto da quel disio* (ballata)

[1] Finazzi 2002-2003, 319.

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Abbreviations

The text of the *rime* is quoted from Finazzi 2002-2003 and from Ariosto 1954. Other abbreviations are as follows:

Adagia = Erasmus 2013
Ambra = de' Medici 1986
Amores = Ovid 1977
Amorum libri tres = Boiardo 2003
Ariosto, *Carm*. = Ariosto 1954
Ars amatoria = Ovid 1979
Asolani = Bembo 1991
Barignano, *Rime* = Vecchio 1972-1973.
Bembo, *Carmina* = Bembo 1990
Bernardo Pulci, *Rime* = Lanza 1975
Catullus = Catullus 1983.
Cino, *Poesie* = Marti 1969
Cortegiano = Castiglione 1981
Correggio, *Rime* = da Correggio 1969
Cosmico, *Rime* = Bartolomeo 1998
Dante, *Rime* = Alighieri 1939
De rerum natura = Lucretius 1982
Decameron = Boccaccio 1982
Epodes = Horace 2014
Filostrato = Boccaccio 1964-1998
Heroides = Ovid 1977
Inf., *Purg*., *Par*. = Alighieri 1966-1967
Laudatio = Bruni 1996
Laurea occidens = Petrarch 1968
Le rime = Bembo 2008
Lettere = Ariosto 1984
Libro de natura de amore = Equicola 1999
Metamorphoses = Ovid 1977-1984
Od. = Horace 2014
Poliziano, *Rispetti* = Poliziano 1986
Prose della volgar lingua = Bembo 1966
Propertius = Propertius 1990
Rem. am. = Ovid 1979
Rvf = Petrarch 2005
Silvae = Poliziano 1996
Stanze = Bembo 2003
Stanze per la giostra = Poliziano 1976

Tarocchi = Boiardo 1993
Tebaldeo = Tebaldeo 1989-1992
Tibullus = Tibullus 1971
Triumphi = Petrarch 1988

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