

**THE NEW WORLD MYTHOLOGY IN ITALIAN EPIC**

**POETRY: 1492-1650**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

My thesis explores the construction of the New World mythology as it appears in early modern Italian epic poems. It focuses on how Italian writers engage with and contribute to this process of myth-creation; how the newly created mythology relates to the political, social and cultural context of the time; and investigates extent to which it was affected by the personal agendas of the poets. By analysing three New World myths (Brazilian Amazons, Patagonian giants and Canadian pygmies), it provides insights into the perception that Italians had of the newly discovered lands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, as well as providing a greater understanding of the role that early modern Italy had in the 'invention' of the Americas. Italian epic poets domesticated New World myths for their own purposes, using written, visual and material sources as an anchor for their agendas. The study of these myths changes, in some cases completely, our reading of the poems. New World myths are at once an exercise in ekphrasis of the maps, cartouches, engravings and collectible objects they derived from, and a record of the impact the Americas had on the early modern Italians.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASF	Archivio di Stato, Florence
BNF	Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence
G.l.	<i>Gerusalemme liberata</i>
Magliab.	Fondo Magliabechiano
MAP	Medici Archive Project
Med. Princ.	Mediceo del Principato
Mn.	<i>Mondo nuovo</i>
MS	Manuscript
n.	note
O.f.	<i>Orlando furioso</i>
RSA	Renaissance Society of America

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the role of New World mythology in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Italian epic poetry. For the purposes of this work, “New World mythology” refers to the set of myths that have classical origins but that the Europeans relocated in the Americas after the discovery of the New World. It includes the myths of the Brazilian Amazons, the Patagonian giants, and the Canadian pygmies, to name but a few. These myths have been studied from a cultural and ethnographical point of view, but their use in literature has not enjoyed as much attention. Although there are numerous studies on the use of classical myths in literature, and numerous mythographical studies about the New World, no study that combines these two fields exists. In my thesis, I propose a study of the New World myths in poetry for the first time; this will provide us with a better understanding of the Italian reception of the New World, as well as giving insights into the political, social and cultural context of early modern Italy.

My main research questions are as follows:

1. How common was the use of New World myths in Italian epic poetry and what did poets do with them?
2. How can the study of New World mythology help us understand the Italian reception of the news from the Americas?
3. What does New World mythology enable poets to say about the political, social and cultural context of early modern Italy?

In the interests of depth rather than spread, I will focus on three of the most important New World myths: the myths of the Caribbean and Brazilian Amazons, the Patagonian giants

and the Canadian pygmies; leaving aside for the moment other New World myths such as El Dorado and the fountain of youth. As we will see, these are the myths which appear most frequently in Italian epic poems. Chapters two to four of the thesis are each dedicated to one of the myths, and divided, in turn, into sub-sections.

I will start with a reply to my first research question in each chapter of the thesis, giving a survey of the presence of the myth in epic poetry as a whole. Of particular interest, in this respect, are the Italian epic poems explicitly dedicated to the discovery and conquest of the Americas that Antonio Belloni (1912: 290) at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, inserted in the so-called 'Columbian corpus' (See 'Primary sources' below for a list of the poems). Protagonists of these poems are usually Christopher Columbus or Amerigo Vespucci, depicted as heroes with the divine mission of Christianising the pagan Native Americans. Since the discovery of the New World is the main theme of these poems, New World myths are often used by poets to give verisimilitude to their stories, and as a means of anchoring their fantastic material to what they believed to be concrete realities. The Columbian poems are, therefore, my main primary sources, but not the only ones. In the chapter dedicated to Canadian pygmies, I have deliberately chosen to focus on two poems extraneous to the American corpus, in order to show that New World myths are also present in poems not explicitly dedicated to the New World. Part of my argument is, in fact, that the Columbian corpus builds on earlier epic poems which, though slow to incorporate detailed accounts of the Americas, are nevertheless inspired by the poetic possibilities its discovery affords.

Question 2 is about how the sources used by the poets to describe the Americas aids our understanding of Italy's reception of the New World. In response to this question, the thesis will analyse different types of media used by the poets to inspire their representations of the New World mythology. Scholars have usually claimed that written accounts were the main

sources for the Italian writers who aimed to represent the American *mirabilia*, given that none of them personally travelled to the New World. In the Amazons sections we will see how the majority of Sixteenth-Century poets integrated the supposedly authoritative accounts of the New World into their poems by quoting them almost verbatim. However, historiographical accounts were not the only sources used by poets. In particular in the chapter dedicated to the Patagonian giants, I will show that poets were influenced by cartographical and visual sources; while in the Canadian pygmies sections I will suggest that material objects preserved in the cabinets of curiosities could have also had a role in the poetic invention of the Americas. The New World myths can be interpreted as ekphrasis in the poems, and as such their visual and material consistency can modify or strengthen their political and cultural meaning. This will allow us to read the poems under a different perspective, generating extra-textual discourses. I will show how these non-conventional sources used by poets can give us precious information about the Italian perception of the New World.

Question 3 explores the process of domestication and exploitation of the New World myths by Italian epic poets. These myths were used to depict their own society, denounce their enemies, take part in the famous debates of their time and satirise their world. For example, the perception of the American Amazons as savage women will give poets the opportunity to take part in the famous *querelle des femmes* that interested many in early modern Europe. The social freedom of the Amazons and the matriarchal society represented by the Amazonian community allowed poets to explore the role of women in their own society. In the New World iconography, the feminine figure representing America was identified with the Amazons, making these warrior women a clear symbol of the newly discovered lands and of its model of gynaecocracy. In the same way, Patagonian giants can be

seen as a satire of the ecclesiastical system; while Canadian pygmies were used as a tool to denounce political corruption.

Chapters two to four, in other words, will provide individual responses to my three research questions. The first chapter is dedicated, instead, to clarify why studying the application of New World mythology in epic poetry is important. I will give an overview of the study of this mythology in academia, looking in particular at what makes these myths different from the classical myths from which they derive. I shall also explain why these myths are especially significant in the Italian context, as Italian states were notoriously considered as having a secondary role in the New World process of discovery.

The second chapter deals, then, with the myth of the American Amazons. This myth was first reported by Columbus, who wrote of the Amazons living in the Caribbean island of Matanino (Martinique) in his letter to Luis de Santángel (1493). With the exploration of the Amazons River by the Spanish explorer Francisco de Orellana, they were moved to Brazil in 1542. This chapter will first of all provide an overview of the complex process that transferred the warrior women from Africa and Asia, where the classical tradition located them, to the Americas. Although news of the discovery of these warrior women in Matanino spread widely in Italy, poets barely introduced them in their works, continuing to locate the Amazons in their traditional locations. In my thesis, I will suggest that this phenomenon was due to the association of the American Amazons with America, and with the impossibility of Italians of ‘possessing’ America because of the marginal role played by Italy in the process of conquest. The late Sixteenth-Century iconographical personifications of America depicted as an Amazon possibly influenced Italian poets in introducing American Amazons in their works. In these engravings, Italian explorers such as Columbus and Vespucci were in fact represented in the act of ‘possessing’ America both sexually and territorially. As such, Italian

poets used the Caribbean and Brazilian Amazons as nationalistic tools to claim the role of Italy in the process that Edmundo O’Gorman, as we will see later, has defined of ‘invention of the Americas’. A second concern of this section is the way in which epic accounts of the American Amazons engage with the famous *querelle des femmes*, and the discussion about the nature of Native Americans started with the Valladolid debate. Through the description of the savage women, poets were able to give a clear idea of their perception of the women and Native Americans in their own society and time. This is particularly evident in the epic poems written in the Seventeenth Century, when poets are freer to add imaginary elements to their stories given that the New World was slowly losing its novelty impact. While the first epic poems dealing with the American Amazons, such as Giuliano Dati’s *Historia della inventione delle diese isole di Canaria indiane* (1493), proposed a cast of the Amazons supposedly discovered by the conquistadores in South America, the latest poems introduced the exotic warrior women in the Old World, domesticating them. I will suggest that in certain epic poems, such as Giovanni Giorgini’s *Mondo nuovo* (1596) and Tommaso Stigliani’s *Mondo nuovo* (1617, 1628), the American Amazons are a mirror of early modern European women – or at least of the poets’ perceptions of them. Their descriptions in these poems help us to understand better how male poets saw women and mothers, a view uncorroborated by female poets since – tellingly – none of the women writing epic poetry at that time featured the American Amazons.

The third chapter of the thesis examines the Patagonian giants first discovered by Magellan in 1520, and documented by the chronicler of the expedition Antonio Pigafetta in his travelogue published in 1524. Like chapter two, it opens with an overview of the presence of the giants in epic literature and an account of the means by which they travelled from the New World to the epic tradition. It deals, in particular, with the cartographic and iconographic

representation of the Patagonian giants and its influence on poets. The Patagonian giants are the most depicted New World creatures in early modern maps, engravings and woodcuts, offering an ideal ground to investigate the use of alternative sources of inspiration for poets. Starting from the assertion that the Patagonian giants described in the poems do not resemble the giants described in the voyage accounts, I will suggest that visual repertoires had a role in their poetic treatment. It is possible that poets had the chance to see the representation of the giants in cartographic and iconographic sources in person, using these images to construct the figures of the Patagonian giants described in their poems. The correspondence of visual and poetic giants will allow me to claim that the description of giants in certain epic poems can be considered a form of ekphrasis (the literary description of a work of art). This modifies our interpretation of the poems, as we are invited to consider the allegorical meaning attributed to the giants in the visual works while reading them. Like the Amazons, the Patagonian giants are used by poets to comment on the environments they lived and wrote in. In some cases, they can be interpreted as political and social tools, and their domestication gives us valuable insights into the cultural contexts the poems were written in. Usually, Patagonian giants are used as a comic and satirical pun in the poems, but they can also be treated as a propaganda instrument as we will see, for example, in Girolamo Bartolomei's *America* (1650).

The fourth and final chapter of the thesis deals with the Canadian pygmies. They were discovered in 1535 by the French explorer Jacques Cartier during the exploration of the St. Lawrence River, and documented in his account published ten years later. As before, this chapter opens by showing where the pygmies appear in epic poetry and with an account of how they might have got there. It deals predominantly with poems that do not belong to the Columbian corpus and provides evidence that Italian epic poets engaged with the New World material more often and far sooner than is commonly thought. However, the Canadian



pygmies (like most American myths before the Columbian corpus) seem to be used more to describe the Old world than to give news about the reality overseas. Poets evoke the New World to emphasise the exoticism of their poems, but they do not really engage with it. For this reason, the Canadian pygmies are more helpful to investigate the political, cultural, and social situation at the courts in which they were written about than to give insights into the myth itself. The poems prioritised in this section are Michelangelo Serafini's *Nanea* (1547) and Agnolo Bronzino's *Piata* (ca. 1552) in which the New World was depicted as a counterpart of the mid-Sixteenth-Century Medici court. Both Serafini and Bronzino did this in order to subtly mock duke Cosimo I, his family and fellows. In these poems, Canadian pygmies are associated with a specific cultural group ideologically close to Cosimo, and their negative representation consequently applies to the category of intellectuals that they embody. A further function of the Canadian pygmies in these poems is to comment on the passion of Cosimo and his family for the New World, shown by the rich Medici cabinet of curiosities preserving numerous West Indies artefacts. I will suggest that the collectability of such items as well as of court dwarves influenced poets in the description of the pygmies, who ended up being a figure for Cosimo himself.

### **Primary sources**

My primary materials are the Italian epic poems of the *Cinquecento* and *Seicento* that incorporate the New World myths into their narratives. Epic poetry provides a particularly interesting corpus for my topic because of the notable characteristic of this genre of combining fiction with historical events significant to the time the poems were composed. As shown by Liam D. Haydon, epic "is powerfully motivated and influenced by the cultural

moment of its production, drawing (and commenting on) contemporary concerns, debates and knowledge” (2012: 12). This makes epic poems like sponges for the marvel created by the discovery of America during the early modern period. The Italian epic poems dealing with New World myths are above all the works that are part of the so called ‘Columbian corpus’, and that merit an introduction here. Giuseppe Bianchini (1892) suggested the division of the Columbian corpus into three main categories: poems, fragments of poems, and Columbian episodes. In the first category, Bianchini included complete poems entirely dedicated to the discovery of the New World; these are Giuliano Dati’s *Historia della inventione delle diese isole di Canaria indiane* (1493), Giovanni Giorgini’s *Mondo nuovo* (1596), Tommaso Stigliani’s *Mondo nuovo* (1617, 1628) and Girolamo Bartolomei’s *America* (1650). By ‘fragment of poems’ he meant the poems completely dedicated to the New World but that were not completed, or that arrived to us in a fragmentary form. In this category, we can find Giovanni Villifranchi’s *Colombo* (1602), Raffaele Gualterotti’s *America* (1611), Guidubaldo Benamati’s *Delle due trombe i primi fiati, cioè tre libri della vittoria navale e tre libri del mondo nuovo* (1622)<sup>1</sup>, Alessandro Tassoni’s *Oceano* (1622) and Agazio di Somma’s *I due primi canti dell’America* (1624).<sup>2</sup> In the last category of ‘Columbian episodes’, Bianchini inserted poems such as Ludovico Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso* (1516, 1521, 1532), Girolamo Fracastoro’s *Syphilis sive morbus gallicus* (1530), Torquato Tasso’s *Gersualemme liberata* (1581), Bernardino Baldi’s *La nautica* (1590), Ascanio Grandi’s *Tancredi* (1632) and Girolamo Graziani’s *Conquisto di Granata* (1650) where the theme of the discovery was

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<sup>1</sup> The two trumpets are the two poems *Della vittoria navale* and *Mondo nuovo*. Benamati refers to them as “primi fiati” because this edition includes only the first three cantos of both the poems. *Della vittoria navale* was completed and published in 1646, while the *Mondo nuovo* was abandoned.

<sup>2</sup> In this category we can include also three early modern poems quoted by Vincenzo Lancetti (1835: 544) considered now lost: Alberto Lavezzola’s *Colombo*, Ambrogio Salinero’s *Il Colombo* and Girolamo Tortoletti’s *Il mondo scoperto*.

treated only in a few octaves or cantos, not having been the main topic of these works.<sup>3</sup> To the list provided by Bianchini we can add Matteo Fortini's *Libro dell'universo* (ca. 1514) of which three cantos (VII-IX) are a poetic version of the letter written by Vespucci to Pier Soderini in 1504,<sup>4</sup> the first canto of *L'America, poema eroico in lode di Amerigo Vespucci* (ca. 1590s) by Giovanni Battista Strozzi the Younger now preserved in the John Carter Brown Library,<sup>5</sup> and Giovanni Maria Vanti's *Mondo nuovo* (c. 1617), an unpublished manuscript studied by Eva Tostini (1996). In the list of the epic poems dealing with the New World provided by Juan Gil (1983) two neo-Latin poems written by Italians also appear: Lorenzo Gambara's *De navigatione Christophori Columbi* (1581), and Giulio Cesare Stella's *Columbeidos libri priores duo* (1585; 1589). As these poems will be considered for their cultural contribution to the New World theme in Italy and not for their linguistic features, they can also be considered part of the Italian Columbian corpus. Despite the "Columbian" adjective, scholars not only included poems dealing with the figure of Christopher Columbus in the corpus, but also the poems where Amerigo Vespucci and Ferdinand the Catholic are protagonists.

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<sup>3</sup> Works presenting an inclusive study of these Italian Columbian poems are Lancetti (1835); Sartorio (1872); Steiner (1891); Barbiera (1892a); Barbiera (1892b); Terenzi (1939); Bradner (1951); Bianchi (1952); Gárate Córdoba (1977); Della Corte (1988); Spina (1988); Cirillo (1990); Bellini and Martini (1992); Giusti (1992); Hofmann (1994); Varela (2002); Bocca (2012). Recently, some of the Italian Columbian poems have been discussed in a seminar organized in Rome by the Sapienza University titled "Epica e oceano", 24<sup>th</sup> October 2014. Some of the papers discussed in this seminar have been included in Gigliucci (2014). In addition, Riccardo Bruscaagli is currently working on a book about early modern Italian poems inspired by the discovery of the Americas: *Epos from the New World. Poems of the Discovery of the Americas, 1524-1650*. The book stems from a series of lectures given in 2009 by Bruscaagli in American universities (University of California, Berkeley; Rutgers University, New Jersey; Graduate Center of CUNY, New York).

<sup>4</sup> On the *Libro dell'universo* and the octaves about Vespucci see Aruch (1924); Bruscoli (1929); Formisano (1986). The *Libro dell'universo* is inserted in the manuscript Magliab. VII, 172 preserved in Florence National Library.

<sup>5</sup> On this poem see Barbi (1900: 55-56); Fido (1982). As explained by Fido (1982: 279-280), the copy of the canto was originally part of the private Florentine archive Ginori-Conti and it was acquired by the John Carter Brown Library for initiative of the assistant librarian Samuel J. Hough in 1981.

In this thesis, I am only going to take into consideration the Columbian poems dealing with New World myths; as a result, some of the incomplete or fragmentary poems quoted above will be excluded. In fact, as in some cases only the first cantos of these poems are available today, some of these works do not engage with the New World at all. They end with the arrival of Columbus in the Canary Islands, where historically the admiral stopped during the first voyage, or with the arrival in the New World, but without engaging with the American theme.<sup>6</sup> My corpus therefore includes only those poems that feature the myths of

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<sup>6</sup> This is the case of Giovanni Villifranchi's *Colombo* (1602), of which only the first two cantos were published. Although Alessandro Tassoni wrote to Agazio di Somma in 1618 "Villifranchi, c'avea ridotto a buon segno il suo poema, quando morì" (1978: 228), we can refer today only to these first two cantos. As such, the poem remained unfinished, and the story ends hastily with the prophesy of the discovery of America revealed by an angel to the lovers Francardo and Amicandra. The same situation can be found in Strozzi's *America* (ca. 1590s), where the protagonist of the poem is the fellow Florentine of the poet, Amerigo Vespucci. The only canto ends with Vespucci and his crew in the middle of the Atlantic admiring the Crux, the constellation that is only visible from the southern hemisphere (I, 87-93). Just one canto of Raffaele Gualterotti's *America* (1611) survives, celebrating the grand duke Cosimo II de' Medici to whom the work was dedicated, without engaging at all with the New World material. The protagonist of the poem is again Vespucci, who according to the poet was the real discoverer of the new continent having been the first to reach the American inland. The story is focused on the role that Vespucci would have had in convincing Ferdinand the Catholic and Isabella of Castile to support Columbus's feat. Continuing with the list of Columbian poems that cannot be included in my primary corpus, Tassoni's *Oceano* (1622) is one of the most famous. It was defined by Marzio Pieri "aborto illustre [...], forse il più segnalato degli aborti secenteschi, riferibili al navigatore genovese" (1986: 28) as just the first canto of the poem was published. It was included as an appendix of the *Secchia rapita* from the very first editions of the poem, and dedicated to the duke of Savoy Carlo Emanuele I. As Tassoni himself explained in the already quoted letter to Di Somma, this canto just contains "quello che occorre al Colombo dallo stretto di Gibeltaro fino alle Canarie, dette l'Isole fortunate" (1978: 306), and it is, therefore, not helpful for our purpose. The three cantos of Benamati's *Mondo nuovo* (1622) are focused on Columbus's difficulties of finding financial support and patronage for his planned journey. It deals with the peregrinations of the Genoese navigator from kingdom to kingdom in Portugal, Northern Africa and Spain, until he finally gained the attention of the Spanish sovereigns Ferdinand and Isabella. The poem is interrupted with the arrival of the Catholic crew in the Canary Islands, described in a few octaves. The poet declared in his comedy *I Mondi eterei* (1628, IV, 385-89) the intention of completing the Columbian poem, but he never finished it, possibly because of the disapproval received from the Accademia della Crusca of the first three cantos (Marchegiani Jones, 1992; Slawinski, 2002: 14; McCarthy King, 2009: 69). According to Alden and Landis (1982: 205), the only two copies of Benamati's *Mondo nuovo* are preserved in the Bancroft Library (University of California, Berkeley, call no. t PQ4610.B295 D3 1622) and in the New York Public Library (Rare Book Collection Rm 328, call no.\*KB 1622). I have read this latest copy. However, a copy is also in the Biblioteca Estense Universitaria in Modena, call no. E 063A025. In Giovanni Maria Vanti's *Mondo nuovo* (c. 1617), the only unpublished poem of the series, the location is an island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean created by the wizard Ismael and his daughter Aurilla to protect the New World from the invaders. The Europeans were attracted to the fake island,

the Caribbean and Brazilian Amazons, the Patagonian giants or the Canadian pygmies. The only exceptions are Matteo Fortini's *Libro dell'universo*, Girolamo Fracastoro's *Syphilis sive morbus gallicus* and Ascanio Grandi's *Tancredi* in which these myths do not appear but that are, nonetheless, fundamental to understanding the role of New World myths in other poems. I focus on these myths because (as mentioned above), they are the myths which appear most frequently in Italian epic poems. The myth of the Amazons, for example, is dealt with in detail in seven poems (Dati, Gambarà, Stella, Giorgini, Stigliani, Di Somma, Bartolomei), that of the Patagonian giants in four (Tasso, Stigliani, Bartolomei, Graziani), and the myth of the Canadian pygmies in two (Stigliani, Bartolomei).<sup>7</sup> Because these myths also appear in poems that are not included in the Columbian corpus, my primary texts include Serafini's *Nanea* (1547) and Bronzino's *Piato* (ca. 1552) as well.

In the following paragraphs I will give an overview of my primary sources, indicating the myths treated by each poet. These poems have been substantially studied by scholarship, both as a corpus in its entirety or with a focus on a single poem. However, scholars focused in particular on the plot, on the poetic role of Columbus and Vespucci, and on the link of these

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and the poem ends with some demons in human shape convincing the Europeans that the island was the marvellous overseas land they were looking for. The real discovery of the Americas, that Vanti would have presumably treated in the following cantos, remains as such unknown, as well as the New World myths that the poet would have eventually incorporated in the plot. The only surviving copy of Vanti's *Mondo nuovo* is now preserved in a private library in Genoa and it has not been possible to access the manuscript. I obtained the information about this work from the summary provided by Eva Tostini in her dissertation *La scoperta dell'America nella poesia italiana dal XV al XVII secolo*. In 1995, when Tostini read the book, the poem was still preserved in the Pallavicini Durazzo library of Genoa (A.I.6) in the collection belonged to Angelico Aprozio and purchased by the marquis Giacomo Filippo Durazzo in 1801. In 1996 the library had been transferred in a new location in the Durazzo-Giustiniani archive in the Palazzo Ducale, but some of the works, including Vanti's poem, have been relocated elsewhere during the moving. However, Tostini's summary excludes that New World myths were included in the work, as proved by the fact that Columbus and his fleet do not arrive in the Americas, but on a magic island halfway between Europe and America.

<sup>7</sup> The myths of El Dorado and the Floridian fountain of youth are popular in Italian epic too and merit further study, though space does not permit me to deal with them here.

poems with the historiographical works while minimum attention has been given to the mythological field.

The first Columbian poem that includes New World myths, Giuliano Dati's *Historia della inventione delle diese isole di Canaria indiane, extracta d'una epistola di Cristoforo Colombo* (1493), is also the first epic poem of the corpus, written just one year after Columbus's maiden voyage. To be precise, there is a debate between the scholars over whether Dati's poem should be considered the first of the series, due to the fact that the *Historia* is a very faithful remake in epic octaves of the letter that Columbus sent to the royal treasurer Gabriel Sánchez to inform him of the new discoveries.<sup>8</sup> Dati composed the poem on the request of the Sicilian publisher Giovanni Filippo de Lignamine, with the possible intention of divulging the news of the newly discovered lands in the easily memorised form of the epic. Francesco Della Corte (1988), Augusto Guarino (1988) and Martin Davies (1992) agree that the work is mainly an epic poem, and as such it should be considered the first poem dealing with the New World theme. In addition, Massimo Donattini (2007) has shown that Dati changed Columbus's letter in order to fit the topic into an epic poem, and as such we can claim the *Historia* belongs to the epic genre. However, scholars such as Carlo Steiner (1891: 11) and Mónica García Aguilar (2003: 61-62) claim that the work has more historical than literary value, and as such its primacy between the epic poems should be reconsidered. Dati includes some verses in his epic translation about the myth of the American Amazons, and starting from his work I will track the evolution of this myth in the Renaissance and Baroque period. This poem is particularly helpful for investigating how poets were gradually able to

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<sup>8</sup> English translation in Dati (1989). On this poem see in particular Olschki (1938); Pando Villarroja (1987), Cachey (1988); Guarino (1988); Davies (1992); Lefevre (1992).

disregard historical news about the discoveries, giving more space to the poetic invention of the Americas.

Very similar to Dati's *Historia* in its dependence on the historical sources, Matteo Fortini's *Libro dell'universo* (c. 1514) paraphrases in octaves the letter sent from Vespucci to the Florentine gonfaloniere Pier Soderini in 1504 (*Quatuor Americi Vesputii navigationes*). Three of the twelve cantos that make up the poem (VII, VIII and IX) are dedicated to the chronicle of the four voyages taken by Vespucci "due per re di Castiglia, e sì ci scrive / le cose strane che gli ànno trovate, / e come sotto la torrida vive / bestie e person(e) ch'àn duo verni e duo 'state; / poi el re di Portogallo gli ele tolse / e duo per sé mandar lo volse" (VII, 3, 3-8, f. 220r). The myth of the giants that Vespucci met in Curaçao is put into verses in canto VIII, 43-51, reporting the historical meeting of Vespucci and his crew with some nice female giants, and their escape due to the arrival of appalling male giants. The *Libro dell'universo* is particularly helpful in my study to prove the American origin of the pygmies described by Serafini and Bronzino in their poems, and to construct the exotic image of the Medici court dwarf Morgante.

Proceeding in a chronological order, Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (1516, 1521, and 1532) deals with the subject of America in the prophecy of the discovery of the New World revealed by Andronica to the English duke Astolfo (XV, 18-27).<sup>9</sup> During the journey from Alcina's island to England, Astolfo wonders if it is possible to reach the East sailing westwards and vice versa, and wherever there are men able to achieve such a venture. The sorceress foretells the advent of new Argonauts and new Tiphys that "lasciar le destre e le manchine / rive che due per opra Erculea fersi; / e del sole imitando il camin tondo, / ritrovar nuove terre e nuovo mondo" (XV, 22, 5-8). The knowledge that Ariosto had of the new

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<sup>9</sup> On this episode see Caracciolo Arricò (1994), MacPhail (2001).

discoveries is evident in the hippogriff following Columbus's steps on the route to Alcina's island, so the abode of the sorceress could be located in the modern Caribbean.<sup>10</sup> It is also evident by the presence, as noted by Giuseppe Nava (1993: 51), of Peter Martyr d'Anghiera amongst the friends congratulating Ariosto for having completed his poem (*Of.*, XLVI, 18, 3). However, Ariosto's use of the New World is more interesting for its lack of engagement, than for its use of the factual material about the Americas. Given the richness of information about the New World preserved in the Este court where the poet produced his work (Laurencich-Minelli, 1985; Donattini, 2000), it is worth asking why the Amazons in the *Furioso* are still Asian, or why the giant Caligorante was not influenced by the discovery of the Patagonian giants. Ariosto's poem is part of a literary and artistic process that prevails in the first half of the Sixteenth Century and that we could define the "evocation of the Americas", in which the New World is implied, but never explicitly revealed. This process is directly linked with the representation of Columbus in this same period, as the Genoese navigator often appears as an allusive figure, rather than as a factual character. To exemplify this trend, Giuseppe Bellini defined the navigator as 'sketched out in watermark', referring to Columbus that "non è protagonista di capolavori letterari, ma è pur vivo attraverso echi della sua impresa, riconoscibili in testi comunque significativi e talvolta, per una ragione o per l'altra, eccezionalmente importanti" (Bellini and Martini, 1992: 293). As with the figure of Columbus, the very idea of the New World is 'sketched out in watermark'. This thesis will suggest some reasons for which this is so.

The New World theme is dealt with more explicitly by Girolamo Fracastoro in his *Syphilis sive morbus gallicus* (1530). In this work, dedicated to the official historian of the Venetian Republic Pietro Bembo, Fracastoro theorised the importance of dealing with the

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<sup>10</sup> See p. 55.



American theme, inviting his fellow poets to introduce the new geographical discoveries in their works (III, 13-26). In the *Syphilis*, the Native American shepherd Syphilus is accused of having been the first to contract the eponymous disease as a punishment for his idolatry and impiety. Syphilus's island is the biblical Ophir and, as suggested by Francesco Della Corte (1986: 142) and Heinz Hoffman (1993: 427), it can be considered the equivalent of Hispaniola (Haiti). The contact that Columbus and his crew had with Native Americans during the process of colonization brought syphilis to the Old World, making the Americans the culprit for the spread of the plague. As noted by Isabelle Pantin (2010), this poem is interesting from a mythological point of view because Fracastoro used mythology to explain medical and scientific phenomena (such as the spread of syphilis in Europe), and used New World myths such as that of Atlantis to give an explanation of contemporary events. Although the New World myths we are interested in do not appear in the poem, I include the *Syphilis* in my primary corpus because of the use that later poets made of Fracastoro's poem. This is the case with Bronzino's production. Canadian pygmies are connected with the horror of syphilis, as it was described by Fracastoro, in order to create a negative perception of the Americas in the readership and what the Americas, allegorically, represented.

Fracastoro's invitation to celebrate the New World was taken up by the Brescian poet Lorenzo Gambara, who declared himself as the first poet entirely engaging with the American theme in the *De navigatione Christophori Columbi* (1581): "primus, qui non nostro sub sole iacentes / ante alios cecini Romana per oppida terras, / Christophorus quas exigua cum classe retexit" [the first of all the poets singing in the Roman towns about the populations living under our sun discovered by Christopher Columbus with a little fleet] (IV, 533-535).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> There are two modern editions of the poem: Gambara (1993) in Italian, and Gambara (2006) in Spanish. English translation is mine.

Dedicated to Cardinal Antoine Perrenot, the poem is the story fictionally told by Columbus to the father of the dedicatee Nicholas Perrenot, during a dinner in Barcelona. It is divided into four books, each dedicated to one of the four voyages taken by Columbus to the New World. In his use of the American material, Gambara strictly followed Peter Martyr's *Decades de orbe novo*, that particularly influenced him in the treatment of the myths of the Amazons (II, 133-151) and of the fountain of youth (III, 794-816).<sup>12</sup> By contrast, the myth of Hesperus, considered by Gambara to be the legitimate king of America, is taken from Oviedo's chronicle. The Spanish historian used this myth to claim the right of the Spaniards to conquer the New World: "yo tengo estas Indias por aquellas famosas Islas Hespérides (assi llamadas del duodécimo rey de España, dicho Hespero)" [I see these Indies as those famous Hesperides Islands (called after the twelfth king of Spain, the aforementioned Hespero)] (Translation in Gomez-Galisteo, 2013: 52). Following Oviedo, Gambara uses this story to explain why America rightfully belonged to the Spanish kingdom, and why conquistadores were entitled to seize the new lands (III, 1-10). The *De navigatione Christophori Columbi* will be used to investigate the myth of the Amazons, as the poet dedicated some verses to the description of these warrior women believed to live in the Antilles. Columbus will not meet them, but their presence will be attested to by the Indian interpreter who will show the captain the lands where they lived.

The myth of the Amazons is also present in Giulio Cesare Stella's *Columbeidos*, where the Amazons living in Matinino Island are visited by Columbus. The two books of Stella's *Columbeidos* deal with Columbus's first and second voyages, probably with the intention of imitating Gambara's structure as the original plan was the publication of four books.

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<sup>12</sup> For the historical accuracy in the *De Navigatione Christophori Columbi* and Gambara's use of literary sources see Demerson (1982); Laurencich-Minelli (1987); Demerson (1988); Demerson (1990); Hofmann (1992); Selmi (1994a); Selmi (1994b).

Dedicated to the future king Philip III of Spain, the poem was first published in London and Lyon (1585) thanks to the interest of the humanist Giacomo Castelvetro, and later in Rome (1589) with relevant changes to the text.<sup>13</sup> Contrary to Gambara, Stella created a plot that, as noticed by numerous scholars, is based more on Virgil's *Aeneid*, than on the geographical compendia about the New World (Hofmann, 1988, 1990a, 1990b; Oberparleiter, 2001; Kallendorf, 2003; Díaz Gito, 2015). The Native American princess Anacaona plays, for example, the role of Dido tragically in love with Aeneas/Columbus; while the role of the Virgilian Juno as the figure delaying the progress of events is played by Satan. The prevalence of fiction in the poem is evident in the title Stella conferred to the Amazons of "protectors" of the other Caribbean tribes (1585, I, 625-634), but the warrior women are didactic characters more than epic ones. As well as Gambara's Amazons, they will help us to show the difficulty of the Italian poets in distancing themselves from the historical sources.

An interesting use of the New World myths is found in Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, where the Columbian enterprise is considered a topic "di poema degnissima" (*G.l.*, XV, 32, 8). Jane Tylus (1993: 100) noticed that in the frontispiece of the 1590 edition of the *Liberata* engraved by Bernardo Castello, Tasso was depicted looking westwards in the harbour of Genoa (fig. 1). The scholar, as well as Angela Caracciolo Arricò (1994: 139), identified the poet with Columbus himself, and the nautical metaphor used when the crusades caught sight of Jerusalem for the first time (*G.l.*, III, 4) was interpreted as an allusion to Columbus/Tasso gazing at the New World. In his *Discorsi del poema eroico* (1594) Tasso agreed, in fact, with Fracastoro that "de l'Indie Orientali o di paesi di nuovo ritrovati nel vastissimo oceano oltre le Colonne d'Ercole, si dee prender la materia de' sì fatti

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<sup>13</sup> There is only a modern edition of the London publication: Stella (1993) in Dutch. Modern editions of the Roman publication are Llewellyn (2006) in English, and Stella (2010) in Spanish.

poemi” (book II), although he gradually disrobed the *Liberata* of its American components. In the first draft of the poem, Tasso located Armida’s palace in the Pacific Ocean, that Carlo and Ubaldo reached after crossing the Strait of Magellan and meeting the “orribili mugghianti” Patagonian giants ([h], XV, 45). These octaves show the knowledge that the poet had of the New World discoveries, also proved by the notes he took on a copy of Giovanni Lorenzo d’Anania’s *L’universale fabrica del mondo overo cosmografia* (1573) as noted by Bruno Basile (1982). However, they also prove Tasso’s decision to deliberately eliminate the New World theme from the *Liberata*. In the vulgate edition Armida’s island becomes one of the Canary Islands; and the discovery of America is only mentioned by Fortuna through the celebration of Columbus’s enterprise (XV, 30-32).<sup>14</sup> As explained by Tasso in a letter written in 1576 to Scipione Gonzaga, this exclusion was due to the poet’s attempt to meticulously conform his poem with the notion of *verisimile*. Sea voyages were expected to last a certain number of days, and a long trip to the Americas was considered inverisimilar in the geographical outline of the poem:

La navigazione non credo sia possibile che resti tutta, poiché tra l’andare e il ritorno vi correrebbe un mese di tempo; e questo mi pare pur troppo lungo spazio. Ne rimarrà almen parte, cioè sino allo stretto: anzi uscirà pur la nave dallo stretto; ma costeggiando la riviera d’Africa, che tende verso l’equinottiale, farà pochissimo viaggio: non si perderà nondimeno l’occasione di dire del Colombo e de gli altri quel che si dice (Tasso, *Lettere poetiche*, p. 88).

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<sup>14</sup> On the geographical revisal of *Liberata*, XV see Cachey (1995: 223-262). The *vaticinium ex eventu* of the discovery of the Americas appears not only in the *Orlando furioso* and in the *Gerusalemme liberata*, but also in other Italian epic poems. In Curzio Gonzaga’s *Fidamante* (1582), Gonzaga is informed of Columbus, Vespucci, Magellan and Hernán Cortés’s future discoveries when on the back of the winged horse Aganippe (XXXVI, 15-28). In Bernardino Baldi’s *Nautica* (1590), the sea-god Proteus forecasts the birth of a “pura Colomba, / che ne’ liguri monti avrà suo nido” (IV, 667-668). In Pier Angelo Bargeo’s *Siriade* (1591, VII) the discovery is prophesied by Ida to her son Goffredo (Tostini, 1996: 40). In Niccoló Lorenzini’s *Il peccator contrito* (1591) is foretold that the Christians will discover “gioiosi un nuovo, un vasto mondo / carico d’oro, e di piante alme e feconde” (V, 112, 3-4). In Tommaso Balli’s *Palermo liberato* (1612), Robert Guiscard flies over the New World on an enchanted float accompanied by the archangel Michael (XXII, 18-19).

In the restyling of the poem that will end with the *Gerusalemme conquistata* (1593), even the prophesy of the discovery of America will be eliminated, Tasso preferring to preserve the New World material for an eventual future poem completely dedicated to the American theme: “rimossi le navigazioni e le meraviglie dell’ Oceano, lasciandomi intero il soggetto per un altro poema” (*Giudicio sopra la Gerusalemme riformata*, Tasso, 2000: 166). Only the parrot in Armida’s island, a symbol of the American exoticism in the *Liberata* that was already in Fracastoro and Gambara’s poems,<sup>15</sup> remains in the *Conquistata* as an evocation of the original location of the island (*Gl.*, XVI, 13; *Gc.*, XIII, 13). The Patagonian giants appearing in the first draft of the *Liberata* are the genuine representation of the knowledge Tasso had of the New World. I will use them as a tool to prove the role of visual sources in the literary invention of America, and to show how the literary use of these visual sources can change our reading of the poem.

In 1596, the marchigiano poet Giovanni Giorgini published the first complete poem in Italian dealing with the New World theme.<sup>16</sup> The *Mondo nuovo* was dedicated to the descendants of Philip II of Spain, and it totals twenty-four cantos, mainly based on Columbus’s second voyage. The protagonist of the *Mondo nuovo* is not Columbus as might be expected, but King Ferdinand the Catholic who will personally travel to the New World, and will actively contribute to the conquest of Mexico, aided by Hernán Cortés. The figure of Columbus is introduced to Moctezuma by the Spanish traitor Aleppe, in his speech given in Tenochtitlan to warn the Aztecs against the conquering goals of the Europeans. He appears as the right-hand of the king, but his role is sacrificed probably because of the dedicatees of the poems, that would have been more appreciative of a poem having their forefather Ferdinand

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<sup>15</sup> For the parrots in Fracastoro and Gambara’s poems see Selmi (1992). For the parrots as symbols of the New World see Pieper (2006).

<sup>16</sup> An anastatic reprint of Giorgini’s *Mondo nuovo* has been published in 2012 by Sabin Americana.

as the main character. In the poem, the Europeans have to first deal with infernal fairies guided by the evil Erctontea who prevented the Christian troops from conquering the New World, and later with the terrible wars against cannibals and Amazons. According to the scholars who focused on the *Mondo nuovo* (Perrotta, 1979; Mancini, 1992; Baldoncini, 1993), Giorgini gave a Eurocentric and pro-Spanish vision of the New World in his poem, but an analysis of the myth of the Amazons will allow us to reconsider his political position. I will also show how the poet made the Amazonian warrior women a token not only of his political agenda, but also of cultural and social interest.

In spite of the primacy of Giorgini's work, the most famous complete poem about the discovery of the Americas is Stigliani's *Mondo nuovo*, an epic work rich with New World mythological references and the subject of my M.A. (Aloè, 2009) and M.Phil. (Aloè, 2011) dissertations (See the 'methodology' section below). Stigliani worked on this book for his whole life, from when he started drafting it in Milan in 1600, until his death in 1651. There are two editions of the poem, one partial (first 20 cantos) published in Piacenza in 1617 and dedicated to the duke of Parma and Piacenza Ranuccio I Farnese; and one complete (34 cantos), published in Rome in 1628 dedicated to Philip IV of Spain.<sup>17</sup> Very influential in the Seventeenth Century and celebrated by numerous literati including Lope de Vega (*Laurel de Apolo*, 1630, IX, 238-240), the *Mondo nuovo* has only recently been considered academically

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<sup>17</sup> In a letter dated 1630 to Domenico Molini, Stigliani refers to another edition of the poem published in Turin, but no copies of this edition have survived (Marino, 1912, II, LXV, pp. 330-331). The poet was planning also a new edition of the poem that should have followed the Roman edition. A copy of the *Mondo nuovo* densely annotated by Stigliani in preparation of this third edition is preserved in the National Central Library of Rome (71.2.A.13). The title page reads: "Questi è il testo corretto e migliorato da ristamparsi, copiandosi in un altro stampato, perché sia leggibile al revisore" (García Aguilar, 2003: 201). A planned modern edition of the *Mondo nuovo* was mentioned by Marzio Pieri in his article *Una ricsusata "Parma nuova" nel poema farnesiano di Tommaso Stigliani* (1988). The edition would have been part of the 'Archivio barocco' project that Pieri created and directed. However, the goal was not achieved, as explained by Pieri, "per genio e volontà di burocrati" (1988: 275 n.). All the quotes from the *Mondo nuovo* in this thesis are from the Roman edition, 1628.

by scholars from different backgrounds and interests. Mónica García Aguilar has provided a critical edition of this work as part of her PhD dissertation (2003), albeit limited to the first twenty cantos of the Roman edition. Mary Watt (2012) has focused on the theological implications of this poem, Marco Arnaudo (2006, 2013) on its debt to Dante's *Commedia*, Nathalie Hester (2012) on Stigliani's attempt to construct an Italian proto-nationalism, and Emilio Russo (2014) on the complexity of this work from a philological point of view.<sup>18</sup> However, as with the other poems, the role of the New World myths in this work has been neglected, with a few exceptions. In *Les Indes farnesiennes* (1992), Marzio Pieri devoted some attention to the myth of the Amazons, connecting the execution of a number of warrior women in Stigliani's poem with the conspiracy hatched in 1612 by the countess Barbara Sanseverino against Ranuccio I Farnese. According to Pieri, "il 'sacro macello' delle Amazzoni, con la loro regina machiavellica, è un modo di replicare la Festa Farnesiana del Dodici" (1992: 185). Another myth that received academic attention is that of the triton known as "cavalier marino" living in the Rio de la Plata, and met by Silvarte and his crew during their exploration of South America (*MN*, XIV, 34-35). As attested to by numerous scholars such as Giovanni Caserta (1985: 40), Angelo Colombo (1992: 108), and Marco Arnaudo (2006: 100), this mythical figure was used by Stigliani to make fun of his competitor Giovan Battista Marino, who was appointed knight in the order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus in 1609. The *Mondo nuovo* is certainly the Italian epic poem that deals most with the New World mythology, and as such it has a preponderant role in my investigation. The Norwegian prince Dulipante lived a few months with the giants in Patagonia (XIII, 140), the "guerrier senza paura" Maramonte helped the pygmies in their battle against the cranes (XVII,

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<sup>18</sup> Other works focusing on Stigliani's *Mondo nuovo* are Arricale (1921); Caserta (1985, 1992), Fiori (1988); Liberatori (1990); Cataudella (1993); Schaffenrath (2007), García Aguilar (2007a, 2014b).

154), the Italian Silvarte married the queen of the Amazons (XV, 95-96), the myth of El Dorado was part of the story told to the Christians by the cacique Giaferre (XV, 74); and Columbus revealed the blunder of the fountain of youth based in Puerto Rico (VII, 104). As I have shown in my MPhil thesis (2011), the *Mondo nuovo* is as serious and precise in its historical and geographical components, as it is parodic through its mythological references. The years in which Stigliani wrote his poem are the same in which the so-called *poemi eroicomici* spread, such as Cervantes' *Don Quijote* (1605) and Tassoni's *Secchia rapita* (1621), and the poet may have been influenced by this new literary trend. Mauro Padula (1992) is the only scholar to define the *Mondo nuovo* a mock-heroic poem, and in the following chapters I will validate his thesis through the study of the New World myths used by Stigliani.<sup>19</sup>

The list of my primary sources continues with Agazio di Somma's *I due primi canti dell'America* (1624) dedicated to Cardinal Francesco Barberini.<sup>20</sup> The poem was published without the permission of the author by Giovanni Manelfi, as explained in a letter sent by Manelfi himself to Barberini (*America*, 1624: 3-6). Di Somma planned to publish at least six cantos as the poet wrote to his friend Fabrizio Ricci,<sup>21</sup> but only the first two cantos appeared on the book market. Scholars such as Francesco Della Corte (1988: 67) and Marcello Barberio

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<sup>19</sup> Stigliani has been considered a parodic author for his poetic collection *Amori giocosi* included in the fourth book of the *Canzoniero* (1623) where he used a caricature of Marino's *stile metaforuto*, and for *La Merdeide. Stanze in lode dei stronzi della Villa Reale di Madrid* (1629) that he published under the pseudonym Nicolò Bobadillo. See Besomi (1975); García Aguilar (2001).

<sup>20</sup> I have read the copy of Di Somma's poem preserved in the Vatican Apostolic library, Stamp.Barb.JJJ.IV.23. A copy is also in the Biblioteca comunale Francesco Antolisei in San Severino Marche (MC), UMCE035511.

<sup>21</sup> "So, che da questi due Canti soli non potrà vedere altro, che le prime scene della favola, non l'ordimento, nel quale, come ho posto particolare studio, temo meno, che dello stile, e di questo aspetto la sua opinione; e quando V.S. perseverasse nella sua antica, facilmente con sua sicurtà, arderei di pubblicarne alle stampe una mezza dozzina di Canti, che a punto stò rivedendo". Letter sent by Agazio di Somma to Fabrizio Ricci, 5th September 1623, in Di Somma (1624, pp. 7-16: 15). The letter has been transcribed in Paudice (1978: 104-106).



(2011) have discussed the existence of a complete edition of the poem titled *Amerigo* (1625), but until now it has not been found.<sup>22</sup> Unlike the other poets, Di Somma started his poem *in medias res*, when Columbus and his men had just arrived in the New World. The story takes place in the Yucatán peninsula that Columbus historically never reached, a detail that drove Eva Tostini to suggest that Columbus was in this poem a double for Hernán Cortés (1996: 133). Amongst the warriors gathered by King Attabila (identifiable with the Sapa Inca Atahualpa), appears the queen of the Amazons Oronta with her companions. The queen is involved in a paradoxical situation where she fights against her own son Ormeno without being aware of the identity of her rival. The maternal instinct of the bloodthirsty Oronta that results in her sparing Ormeno's life will be used in the chapter of the Amazons to better understand the perception of motherhood by this particular poet.

An etiological explanation of the Spanish conquest of the New World is given in Ascanio Grandi's *Tancredi* (1632). In this poem, dedicated to the duke of Savoy Carlo Emanuele I, the Tassian hero Tancredi narrates the adventures he experienced after the conquest of Jerusalem to the Byzantine emperor Alexios. After crossing the Pillars of Hercules, Tancredi tells how he sets free a young black girl who was taken prisoner by a sea monster. The girl, called America, is described as a "strana donzella dolorosa, e trista, / [...] / quasi produrle Etiopia have per uso, / negra i membri: ma quasi Angelo in vista" (XI, 41). The daughter of Norte (personification of the Atlantic Ocean) and Platia (representing the Rio de la Plata), America was born with black skin because of a poison the evil Sur (the Pacific Ocean) made her parents drink. Thanks to the baptism by Tancredi, America was able to recover her original white appearance, converting herself and her people to the Christian faith.

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<sup>22</sup> According to the Augustinian writer Angelico Apro시오, Agazio Di Somma wrote four books of a poem titled *America*. Apro시오 (1642: 16).

Although the *Tancredi* does not explicitly feature New World myths, the personification of America in this poem will be helpful in the Amazons's chapter to confirm the identification between American Amazons and American territories in the other poems.

In *L'America poema eroico di Girolamo Bartolomei già Smeducci* (1650), the Florentine Bartolomei presents his compatriot Vespucci as the hero of the New World and protagonist of the poem.<sup>23</sup> Columbus is quoted in some episodes (cantos IV-VII), but he is reduced to a secondary role. Dedicated to Louis XIV of France, the poem is divided into forty cantos and is based on Homer's *Odyssey*, as declared by the poet in the preface. The *America* presents two different points of view about the process of conquest: one given by the Spanish sailor Oristano, and the other by the ghost of the *cacique* Guancanarillo. This suggests a desire in the author to give an objective and impartial view of the event, an approach that is unique in the Columbian corpus. American Amazons are only mentioned in the poem with didactic purposes, highlighting as such the end of the presence of New World warrior women in the Italian epic production. Numerous octaves are instead dedicated to the myth of Patagonian giants that are 'discovered' not by Magellan, as reported in the historical accounts, but by the protagonist of the poem Vespucci. This switching of roles is not accidental but, as we will see, has the precise goal of creating a promotion of Florence and of Bartolomei himself.

The last Columbian poem I will take into consideration is Girolamo Graziani's *Conquisto di Granata* (1650), where at the end of the XXI canto the conquest of Mexico by Cortés is prophesied by a hermit: "Di strano ciel, di sconosciuta gente / Hernando scoprirà l'ultima meta; / e del vasto ocean vinti gli sdegni / pianterà nuove palme in nuovi regni"

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<sup>23</sup> On this poem see Tostini (1996: 196-211); Hester, N. "Il Mio Toscano Eroe": Vespucci as Epic Hero in Girolamo Bartolomei Smeducci's *America* (1650), paper presented at the 2011 RSA Annual Meeting, Washington, DC.

(XXI, 124, 5-8).<sup>24</sup> The figure of Columbus is present in the poem, although the Admiral is mainly a knight taking part in the battle to free Granada from the Islamic domination. The discovery of America is recounted by Columbus himself to Armonte, Consalvo and other Christian knights that Columbus met in his journey home, and the story historically follows the events as they are described in Columbus's journal.<sup>25</sup> The only extraneous element in the story is Columbus meeting the dog-headed giants identifiable with Patagonians, who can be considered the maximum representation of the phenomenon of domestication of New World myths in the early modern period.

It is evident from this overview of the Italian Columbian poems that poets were slow to engage completely with the “*benedetta materia del Mondo nuovo*”, as Tassoni defined it (1978: 135). Considering that Giorgini's *Mondo nuovo* is the first recognised Italian poem completely dedicated to the discovery of America, it took more than a century for the poets to believe in the literary potential of the American theme. The reasons for this delay have been theorised by a number of scholars, and can be linked to the discourse about the “evocation of America” discussed above. According to Bianchini (1892: 13-14), the delay was due to the fact that the geographical discoveries did not have the same value for all the Italian states (for example, the journeys of the Venetians Cadamosto and Contarini were important for Venice, but not for the other states). Steiner (1891: 9) proposed that the Italians were more interested in the East Indies, that they believed to be the real terrestrial Paradise, rather than in the Americas considered as “invented” by the Spaniards. Belloni (1912: 291) focused on the economic damage to the trade of important Italian ports such as Genoa and Venice as a result

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<sup>24</sup> On the *Conquisto di Granata* see Di Nepi (1976); Maragoni (1989); Foltran (2005); García Aguilar (2014a).

<sup>25</sup> On the Columbian episode in the *Conquisto di Granata* see Baldoncini (1992); Hester, N., *Columbus Discovers Granada: Baroque Italian Epic from the New World to Al-Andalus*, paper presented at the 2015 RSA Annual Meeting, Berlin.

of the discovery of the Americas. Lorenzo Bianchi (1952: 274) concentrated on the difficulties of poets in creating poetical marvel when this marvel was already part of the topic itself. More recently, Elisabetta Selmi (1994b: 472-473) considered that this delay was connected with the Church discrediting Columbus, while Eva Tostini (1996: 19) suggested that it could have been due to publishing issues as a result of the restrictions imposed by the Inquisition. Erin McCarthy-King (2012: 42) instead proposed that the discoveries were not viewed in a positive manner by some famous humanists such as Pietro Bembo (*Istoria venetiana*, IV, 137-138), and this could have discouraged the poets from dealing with such a topic. In my MPhil thesis (Aloè, 2011: 12), I have pointed out that this delay was also possibly due to the poets' need to interact with the typical characters of the chivalric tradition to maintain the interest of the readers. The literal authority of poets such as Matteo Maria Boiardo and Luigi Pulci made it difficult for the poets of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries to distance themselves from the successful and fortunate Carolingian poetic cycle, that continued to be in vogue for the entire early modern period.

There are elements of truth in each theory outlined above, though for the sake of this thesis I would like to make a different point. Despite the slow uptake of the detail of New World myths in Italian epic poetry, there was a gradual incorporation of isolated themes, tropes and characters. There is, indeed, a delay in the official poetic treatment of the American theme, but the New World was more present than expected in the early modern Italian poems. Whilst it is true that it took a long time for an epos based on the New World to be created in Italy, it is also true that elements connected to the discovery of the Americas were already present in Italian works that did not engage at all with the theme. This is the case of Teofilo Folengo's *Baldus* (1517), where, as noticed by Maurizio Pegrari (1994: 193-194), the goddesses and nymphs described in the poem inhabited the New World: "Hae sunt divae

illae grassae, nymphaeque colantes, / albergum quarum, regio, propiusque terenus / clauditur in quodam mundi cantone remoto, / quem Spagnolorum nondum garavella catavit” [There are the fat goddesses and oozing nymphs whose abode, region and private country are hidden in a remote sector of the world that no Spanish caravel has yet reached] (I, 17-20; English translation in Folengo, 2007: 3). Or Luigi Tansillo’s *Della balia* (1552), in which the poet noticed the new exotic trend popular amongst Neapolitan women of purchasing lapdogs from West Indies and Peru: “Di Spagna, dal Perù, dall' Indie nuove / Recar vi fate or cagnin rosso, or bianco, / E d'ogni estremo lido, in che si trove” (I, 10, 1-3). Even in a work deeply soaked with classical references such as Moderata Fonte’s *Il merito delle donne* (1600), the young widow Leonora would love to visit “le meraviglie del mondo, come quei mari lontani dove dicono che nascono le perle” (second day) meaning the Caribbean Sea (fig. 2). In this thesis, I will show that the New World myths were already present in literary works not explicitly dedicated to the New World. It is for this reason that to the poems of the Columbian corpus quoted above, I will add two poems that have at first sight nothing to do with the New World theme. Michelangelo Serafini’s *Nanea* and Agnolo Bronzino’s *Piato* are two epic poems that have received recent scholarship attention, but that have never been included in the New World corpus. Although the myth of Canadian pygmies is present in Stigliani’s *Mondo nuovo* and Bartolomei’s *America*, I will devote most of the section of the pygmies showing how the pygmies present in these ‘non-Americanist’ poems can be said to originate in America, and how this changes our reading of the poems. The pygmies section can be considered a case study, as the same analysis could also be applied to the other New World myths.

## Methodology

This thesis is the culmination of a journey that began in Milan in 2009, when for my *laurea magistrale* (MA) in the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore I wrote a dissertation about Tommaso Stigliani's *Mondo nuovo*. The poem was analysed from a strictly philological point of view, applying a close textual analysis to the text. The dissertation was particularly focused on the editorial history of the poem, and the sources used by Stigliani to describe his American enterprise. Moving to the University of Birmingham in 2010 for my MPhil degree allowed me to take into consideration different methodological approaches. I wrote my MPhil dissertation on Stigliani's reception and portrayal of the New World in his *Mondo nuovo* and, in particular, on the impact it had on his literary style and representation of Italian culture. While the focus of the Italian MA had been on the editorial history and evolution of the poem, the MPhil broadened its focus to include a study of how the text reflected and was influenced by the precise historical time and place in which it had emerged. My work showed how the Americas described by Stigliani were influenced by the literature emerging from the New World conquests, but that they were most of all a mirror of Europe, where characters and situations were borrowed from the Old World. The New World myths, numerous in Stigliani's poem, are used in particular to describe early modern Italy.

Further reading of comparable epic poems led to the realisation that this was a widespread phenomenon worthy of study. It is in response to this discovery that I began this PhD. I adopt extensively the philological approach - or close textual analysis - that I have used during my Italian formation, balancing it with interdisciplinary readings of the works selected. In my previous works, philology enabled me to have a good knowledge of the texts I was working on, but not to locate them in a cultural and social discourse. In order to do this

and, indeed, to investigate the role that visual material had on these works, I moved in part into the province of cultural studies and art history.

As widely known, the philological approach is the canonical method used in Italy - as well as in Germany - to analyse all forms of art and poetry starting from primary school. It consists in closely look at the artistic or literary work by considering all its denotative and connotative meanings. The focus is completely on the text/work of art, that is studied in fine detail to gather information about how it produces meaning and in what terms it can be read. Through examining the inner-working devices that build its framework, the object of analysis is analytically assessed: larger themes or concerns are discussed by considering the text as a whole, and by studying how the single features work together.

In the Anglophone context traditional philology suffered criticism, especially in the 60s and 70s, as it was “seen as the intolerant voice of the masculine establishment and regularly associated with Eurocentrism and even imperialism” (Said, 2004). In response to the criticism of critical theorists, scholars have begun to defend philology again, to call for a return to philology or even for a ‘new philology’. Since the 80s, there has been a succession of high-profile titles in this vein: Paul de Man’s *The Return to Philology* (1986), Lee Patterson’s *The Return to Philology* (1994), Geoffrey Galt Harpham’s *Returning to Philology* (2005) and Sheldon Pollock’s *Future Philology?* (2009), to name but a few. In 2013, Richard Scholar advised a return to traditional close textual analysis, and the restoration of the study of the words as crucial for the historical and political comprehension of a text. His work was indebted in particular to Edward Said’s call for a return to philology in the last book he wrote before he died. *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004) is both a call for a return to philology, and an exercise in philological reading. In the third chapter titled “The Return to Philology”, Said proclaimed himself to be against ‘readism’, a neologism he coined to

indicate those American academics who criticise close reading as being “so seriously and naively as to constitute a radical flaw” (2004: 60). He suggested, instead, that the close reading of a literary text should locate “the text in its time as part of a whole network of relationships whose outlines and influence play an informing role *in* the text” (Said, 2004: 62). The proclaimed urgency to return to philology in his final work made him one of the most famous ‘new philologists’. I will apply the close reading suggested by these literary critics to my epic poems, putting an emphasis on the words used by my authors through a close textual analysis of the works in my corpus. My texts will be ‘reread’, and the words used by poets considered as bearers of insights. Words will be used not only as tools to interpret the poems, but also as keywords to understand better the context in which these texts were produced and their relation with each other. One of the best example of this practise is in chapter four, where the study of the words ‘gattomammon’ (guenon), ‘bertuccia’ (magot) and ‘babuino’ (baboon), used by some of the poets considered in this thesis to describe both court dwarves and Native Americans, is helpful to create a connection between these two categories, and the poems where they appear.

Keeping the philological approach central to my investigation, I briefly touch upon cultural studies that are useful when it comes to contextualising the poems within a specific cultural context and to valorising non-canonical texts in my search for contextual evidence. I was especially influenced by Stephen Greenblatt, whose studies of the New World marvelousness in *Marvellous Possessions* (1991) have shaped some of the questions this thesis addresses. Greenblatt claimed that “we can be certain only that European representations of the New World tell us something about the European practice of representation” (1991: 7). This statement chimes profoundly with the aims of this thesis which seems to identify to what extent the New World mythology has influenced the Italian



epic production, and, vice versa, to what extent Italian poets have developed this mythology. Of particular interest are also Greenblatt's observations that the language of 'wonder' used by early explorers to describe America derived from the European practices of representation; and that Europeans are, of course, the models used by poets to describe Native Americans. Although some of the poets considered, such as Bartolomei, tried to escape from Eurocentrism offering their readers Native American points of view, their background is European, and even their nonconformity could be identified as a 'European' cultural component.

This work is also in debt to other cultural scholars who, like Greenblatt, dealt with the themes of wonder and the New World. Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park's *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (1998) has been inspiring for its interpretation of the wonder created by the discovery of the Americas as a cultural category. The crucial role played by the court society in the construction of wonder has been particularly useful in the section about the Canadian pygmies, where the exotic objects preserved in the Medici cabinet of curiosities are presented as cultural and social artefacts. In the same vein, the volume *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (2006) edited by Robert John Weston Evans and Alexander Marr offers a well-rounded take on the theme. The introductory essay by Marr with an overview of the current research in the area of curiosity and wonder has been a guide during my research. Marr's claim that many of the *mirabilia* discussed in the volume can be seen as "early modern pictures of cabinets" (2006: 10) inspired my interpretation of the episode of the pygmies in Serafini and Bronzino. My thesis suggests in fact that in these poems, Canadian pygmies are described as collectible objects in an early modern *Wunderkammern*. The *Materialities, Text and Images* workshop organised in May 2013 by the California Institute of Technology and the Huntington Library has been especially helpful

for studying material culture and its applicability to my thesis. This workshop extensively discussed the relationship between materiality and culture, encouraging me to consider the New World myths in my poems through the lens of materiality. In addition, Wes Williams's *Monsters and their Meanings in Early Modern Culture* (2011) helped reflect on the nature of the New World creatures in the poems. Although Williams does not speak explicitly about the New World, his monsters migrated from the margin of the maps to the pages of poems and romances are indicative of the importance that monsters increasingly acquired in early modern society. They were, for Williams, the bearers of allegorical meanings helpful for understanding the society that created them. The idea that it is possible to acquire valuable information about early modern Italy by solely looking at the presence or absence of New World 'monsters' in the poems of my corpus is built on this concept.

Finally, in my treatment of New World or New World-inspired cartography and art, I move into the province of art history and cartography. Taking visual material in consideration, my thesis shows how the American Amazons can be considered a personification of America in the poems; Patagonian giants as ekphrases of their visual counterparts; and Canadian pygmies might be interpreted as a playful metaphor for Cosimo I de' Medici - as for the painting of the dwarf Morgante depicted by Bronzino. Applying a non-conventional reading to the texts, I will show how literature and arts are strictly bound in their representation of the New World myths, and of the Americas in general. I refer in particular to the comparative method used by the authors working on the connections between cartography and literature, such as Theodore J. Cachey Jr. (2007), Nancy Bouzrara and Tom Conley (2007). Their discussion about the role that cartography could have had in poetry has been crucial for my interpretation of the New World myths as visual data. Giorgio Antei (1988, 1989) and Remedios Mataix's (2010a, 2010b, 2010c) timely analysis of the New World iconography has

been applied to my epic poems, working as such on the construction of knowledge that my poets had of this iconography. In addition, Lia Markey's works (2008, 2012) have been very helpful for her interpretation of New World elements present on early modern engravings and woodcuts as tools of Italian propaganda and nationalism. The way in which she has been able to link images and issues of contemporary concern in Italy has been influential in this thesis, but Markey's text has also been useful because some of the very symbols and icons she interprets appear in the poems and visual materials studied herein. In the same vein, Chet Van Duzer (2012, 2013a, 2013b) has applied Markey's propagandistic reading of the New World elements to cartography, inspiring my visual and material reading of the poems.

A large amount of archival research has been dedicated to maps and visual sources, conducted in the Huntington Library (San Marino, California), Houghton Library (Cambridge, Massachusetts), Koerner Library (Vancouver, Canada), Vatican Apostolic Library (Vatican City State), British Library (London, UK), Cadbury Research Library (Birmingham, UK), Braidense Library (Milan, Italy) and New York Public Library (New York City, NY). Although the original intention for visiting these libraries was to define my primary literary sources and access the poems not available in a digital form or published in a modern edition, I combined my studies on the poems with research of the New World myths on visual sources. I was fortunate enough to have the possibility to see in person some of the visual works discussed in this thesis, such as the only surviving copy of Pierre Desceliers' 1550 planisphere in the British Library (Add. MS 24065), and the only copy of Caspar Vopel's 1558 world map now preserved in the Houghton Library (signature 51\*.2577P). One of the most interesting works of cartography encountered is an underrated and spectacular compendium of early modern maps preserved in the Huntington Library known as the Huntington Library Rare Book 109496. In the Huntington Library catalogue the map

collection is attributed to Hendrik Hondius, and signed under the name of *America noviter delineata*, [Amsterdam?], 1631; however Hondius's map is only one of the numerous maps comprising this atlas. As noticed by Bruce P. Lenman (2009: 396), these maps and charts have various origins, and were produced at different times, possibly collated after 1720 by a French compiler. This atlas is one of the primary sources for the study of the myth of Patagonian giants in cartography, as Patagonians are depicted or labelled in almost all the maps depicting South America in this early modern atlas.

In addressing the question of how Italian epic poetry appropriates and adopts New World myths for propagandistic, political and cultural reasons, I will use terminology drawn from the field of Translation Studies that was already adopted by Wes Williams. I am referring in particular to the use of the words 'domestication' and 'foreignisation' that translation scholars starting with Lawrence Venuti (1995) use to indicate the role of culture in the translation process. These concepts of 'domestication' and 'foreignisation' can be apply to the translation of stories and myths discussed in this thesis from one context to another, and from one genre (be it literary, visual or material) to another. They provide useful insights into the processes through which epic poets translate, interpret and adapt the New World materials and myths, as I articulate the uneven way in which the New World mythology appears in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century epic poetry.

It may be surprising to note the absence of mythological and archetypal criticism in a thesis about myths. However, this thesis is not concerned with the archetypes and motives that underlie human behaviour and that are expressed in myths. Unlike Northrop Frye and mythological critics in his wake, this thesis is not interested in finding mythemes and archetypes that can be adaptable to many literary texts. The aim of this work is in fact to investigate the mythopoesis process evincible from primary sources, rather than to give a

mythological reading of them. In the poems analysed, New World myths are consciously inserted, and they are not the result of a critical reading of the poems.

## Chapter one

### INTRODUCING THE NEW WORLD MYTHOLOGY

In 1492 Columbus arrived in America. He was convinced that the lands where he landed during his four voyages were near Cipango (Japan), and in front of the Golden Chersonesos (Malaysia), and as such he imagined the *mirabilia* that the Europeans believed to be in Eastern Asia located there. He was influenced by texts such as Marco Polo's *Milione* (c. 1298) and Enea Silvio Piccolomini's *Historia rerum ubique gestarum* (1463), and he always remained deeply attached to the medieval geography described in these works (Randles, 1993; Nava Contreras, 2005). He expected to find outlandish creatures such as mermaids, pygmies and the one-eyed Arimaspi in the newly discovered lands, as proved by the notes he took on a copy of Pierre d'Ailly's *Imago mundi* (1485) (Quartino, 1988: 166), and he was surprised that, at least initially, he failed to meet signs of these Eastern wonders: "En estas islas, hasta aquí no he hallado hombres monstrudos como muchos pensaban" [In the islands so far, I have found no monsters, as some expected] (Columbus, 2010a: 19).

Columbus was not the only one to bring his cultural baggage derived from the classical and medieval traditions to bear on his descriptions of the New World. The classical myths and medieval monstrous races continued to be transferred to the Americas, even when it was clear that the lands discovered in the West were part of a new unknown continent. Some of the myths had never had a precise location in the Old World, and the discovery of the Americas was perceived as a sort of confirmation of the ancient stories reporting the existence of marvellous creatures and places. Everything that was not possible to find in the Old world,

such as the outsized one-foot sciapods, the griffins and the unicorns, was moved to the New World in order to strengthen the credibility of authors such as Plato, Aristotle, Pliny the Elder and Seneca who described these mythological creatures in their works (Daston and Park, 1998: 219). The poet-physician Girolamo Fracastoro even considered the New World the lost continent of Atlantis in his *Syphilis sive morbus gallicus* (1530, III, 265-379) a theory later supported by numerous historians and geographers such as Giovanni Lorenzo d'Anania (Orvieto, 2007: 307; Pantin, 2010: 26). Other myths, even if exactly located in the ancient paradoxography, were moved to the New World to enrich the new lands with fascinating *mirabilia*. This attracted the attention of European sovereigns and personalities financing the explorations who were unquestionably fascinated by the potential health benefits and wealth offered by the Americas. This is the case, for example, of the fountain of youth that Herodotus clearly placed in Ethiopia (*Histories*, III, 22-24), but that after the discovery of America began to be sought in present-day Florida (Conti, 2001; Greenberger, 2003).<sup>1</sup> I call the corpus of these myths transferred from Europe to America the 'New World mythology'. My aim is to clarify in this chapter what this mythology is, and why it is worth considering it in early modern Italian epic poems. As the concept of New World mythology is not widely known, I will provide my readers with some definitions that will be helpful to engage with the next chapters.

I will start giving an overview of the New World mythology where I present some theories about its nomenclature, origin, corpus and role. After this, I will provide a list of the main early modern 'media' where New World myths appear, and how these 'media' interact

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<sup>1</sup> An archaeological park dedicated to the fountain of youth was built in the 1860s in modern-day St. Augustine (Florida), the area that Juan Ponce de León first explored looking for the fountain of youth in 1513.

with each other. Finally, I will explain why the Italian context is particularly interesting for the study of New World myths.

### **Bridging the Old World and the New**

New World myths began to appear as Europeans drew on Old World myths to explain and describe the marvels they encountered in the Americas. The land of the Gran Can, literally “great dog”, that Columbus believed to have reached suggested the presence of dog-headed populations in the Americas, as they were described by medieval authors such as Mandeville, Giovanni da Pian del Carpine and Friar Odoric (Milbrath, 1991: 2). Prester John was first identified by Columbus with a powerful cacique dressed in a white tunic, and later associated with El Dorado (Orvieto, 2007: 270). The Brazilian cannibals were described in terms inspired by the biblical populations of Gog and Magog imprisoned by Alexander the Great for their barbaric behaviour that included cannibalism (Magasich-Airola and De Beer, 2006). The Patagonian succarath, with a human-like head, the body of a dog and a feather-like tail, was considered a new species of manticore; and even the alien animals of the New World were transformed into mythological creatures: opossums were called chimaeras, the sea cows confused with mermaids and the armadillos identified with dragons, to name but a few (Van Duzer, 2012: 424). The women warriors met by Francisco de Orellana in Brazil were believed to be the Amazons described by Herodotus and Strabo, the tall indigenous people of Patagonia were considered giants by Antonio Pigafetta, and the Eskimo people were possibly confused with the pygmies fighting against the cranes.<sup>2</sup> When at the end of the 1550s El Dorado was no longer the indigenous king who used to cover his body with gold dust, but a

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<sup>2</sup> Precise reference to the origin of these myths will be given in the relevant sections.



golden town located in the Bogotá area, it was considered the long-searched golden city of God (Silver, 1992: 1). The Indians were identified with the mythical Brahmans, and with the ten lost tribes of Israel deported during the domination of the Assyrian Empire; while the indigenous women were often compared to nymphs and naiads. Theodore Cachey noticed how Peter Martyr in his *Decades de orbe novo* (1511, 1516, 1530) compared the capture of an indigenous woman with the kidnapping of Io, Medea and Helen, giving birth to a new clash between East and West (1992: 34). Mythical places such as Hy-Brasil, Bimini Island, Antilia, Thule, California and numerous others were believed to be discovered in the New World, becoming in some cases the toponyms of modern geographical areas. The European colonists were seen as new Argonauts searching for the Golden Fleece in the rich lands of the New World (Sánchez, 1993b), and Columbus himself was often identified with mythical navigators such as Jason, Ulysses and Aeneas. Susan Milbrath claims that in the New World Europeans “reinforced existing myths or created new ones” (1991: 1), but it is hard to find a myth that does not have its equivalent in the classical mythology or medieval teratology.

Although strictly derived from the classical and medieval tradition, these myths located in a new environment developed however into new stories that were neither wholly of the New World, nor wholly European. A new element of wonder was inserted into familiar myths when Europeans integrated the Americas into the framework of European reality. Colonialists, missionaries, historians, poets, artists, musicians shaped the New World myths to create political, propagandistic, social and cultural discourses. As claimed by Stephen Greenblatt, if in medieval times the presence of *mirabilia* distanced people from exotic places as they were perceived as unsafe, in the early modern period people were instead looking for these wonders that were conquered using marvel as a form of possession (1991: 24). The New

World myths can be considered the ‘weapon of choice’ used by the Europeans to interact with the new American reality.

The figures and places introduced into the Americas by the Europeans, in other words, were ‘hybrids’, a combination of “Old World iconology with New World geography” (Höfele and Von Koppenfels, 2005: 3). Some people called these hybrids ‘monsters’ in a move that evoked the ancient Plinian monstrous races (Carreño, 2008; Braham, 2012). Other preferred the term ‘New World marvels’ as picked up by Stephen Greenblatt (1991), Anthony Pagden (1993), Jean Céard (1996) to emphasise the newness and otherness offered by the newly discovered lands. Monsters or marvels, the hybrid inhabitants of the New World were a locus of encounter between the Old World and the New one. As such, they provided a unique opportunity to say things both about Old Europe and New America. It is their hybrid nature and the insights they provide into Italian perceptions of home and of abroad that fuels the present thesis. I use the term ‘New World mythology’ throughout to refer to the fables, inventions and fictions which the New World explorers brought back from America and which epic poets in Italy used more or less imaginatively in their poems.<sup>3</sup> It is important to distinguish between New World mythology as I use it here and the indigenous myths of the Native Americans, and also to consider that the New World myths carry features of indigenous stories, places and inhabitants combined with the myths and realities of their European heritage. We will return to this soon.

The exact origin of this mythology is an ongoing source of conjecture for scholars. In part, these myths were created by the linguistic incomprehension between Europeans and Native Americans. As Michael Householder (2011) and Chet Van Duzer (2012: 425) argue,

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<sup>3</sup> According to Mircea Eliade “mythology” is a synonym of “fable, invention, fiction” (1963: 1). He claims that this is the standard meaning of the concept of myth, instead of the sacral archaic sense considered by historians of religion and sociologists.

the first conquistadores could have misinterpreted the strange words of the indigenous people confusing the phonetic similarities of some words. The Canadian pygmies, for example, came to be so called because of a misunderstanding of the indigenous word “picquenyans” by the French explorer Jacques Cartier: their meaning is not necessarily related to small people as its sound might suggest to a French ear, and not because of any obvious similarities with pygmy races. In part, these myths arrived to the Americas because of the impact that fantastic works such as the Twelfth-Century letter of Prester John and Sir John Mandeville’s Fourteenth-Century *Book of the Marvels of the World*, as well as the authoritative classical sources, had on the New World mythopoesis (Olschki, 1937; Todorov, 2001: 310-311). Like Columbus, the conquistadores were influenced by their cultural and literary heritage, and were unable to report their experiences in an objective way. Another source of the New World mythology is the early modern inability to distinguish reality from fantasy which Wes Williams (2011) describes as a product of the marvellous which creates distorted images of reality and produces confusion and anxiety, and therefore myths and monsters. The same account could be put more cynically, as well, since the distortion may well have been deliberate and politically motivated. In his study of the visual representation of America, Sean Teuton even suggested that the conquistadores in their attempt of legitimating “the destruction of life, corrupted cultural accounts, reducing them to fabulation” (2010: 91). If the eyewitnesses already had a distorted vision of the New World, the armchair cartographers, historians, poets and artists who used secondary sources overstated, intentionally or not, the creation of these myths (Marsh, 1992; Gomez Espelosin, 2006). They yielded, to use Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park’s words, “wonder on top of wonder” (1998: 136). This is the case of a Native American described with “shoulders so high that the face seems to be in the chest” (Bucher, 1981: 36), subsequently transformed into a headless blemmyae by early modern engravers.

As anticipated, the New World myths were also influenced in places by the Native American mythologies which the European conquerors eventually came into contact with. According to Jean-Pierre Sánchez, “ces nouveaux mythes sont des alliages solides d’éléments indigènes et européens, fondus dans divers creusets” (1987: 23) [these new myths are a solid alloy of indigenous and European elements, blended in various ways]. The archetype of the Amazons, for example, was also part of the indigenous imagination, where warrior women also existed and were known as *coniupuyara*, “great lord” (Carter, 1995: 119). As reported by Friar Ramón Pane, a Spanish missionary priest travelling with Columbus in his second voyage, in the Taino mythology the hero Guagugiona brought all the women of Haiti to Matitino (Martinique), and this island was considered the ‘island of women’ since ancient times (1991, cap. II).<sup>4</sup> In Columbus’s *Journal*, it is made clear that the natives spoke to him about the myth of the Amazons even before he mentioned them, suggesting their involvement in the American placing of this myth: “diz que supo el Almirante que allí, hacia el Este, había una isla adonde no había sino solas mujeres, y esto diz de muchas personas lo sabía” [The Admiral also heard of an island further east, in which there were only women, having been told this by many people] (2012: 105; English translation in 2010b: 151). Many such examples of indigenous myths meeting European ones exist. Another is the myth of the handless men which were known to the indigenous people in the upper Orinoco as *exxaipanoma* and located in the European tradition in Ethiopia (Doggett, Hulvey, & Ainsworth, 1992: 74).<sup>5</sup> Clearly, the Native American myths were transformed when they came to be reported by the Europeans with echoes of the classical mythology in evidence. The

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<sup>4</sup> The fable of a group of women who, having stolen magical flutes that only men were supposed to play, forced their husband to work for them was famous amongst the Tucano people living in the north western Amazon. See Reichel-Dolmatoff (1996).

<sup>5</sup> Edmundo Magaña (1982) claims that some of the Plinian monstrous races believed to live in America were part of the mythology developed by Carib people in Suriname.

Europeans modified the Native American mythology for their own purposes as syncretists like Stan Steiner argue (1976: 140). And Native Americans may have changed it too as they communicated their stories to the Europeans. For those myths connected with wealth such as El Dorado, for example, it has been suggested that Native Americans could have overstated the abundance of gold in El Dorado to keep the conquistadores away from their own gold. This idea has been developed by Harold Osborne (1968: 134), who considered El Dorado a form of protection in part created by the indigenous populations, or even a tool to mock the Europeans.

Cataloguing the New World myths has been notoriously hard. Wayland D. Hand (1976) divided the myths imported into the Americas by the Europeans into ‘Southern Mysteries’ (South American myths) and ‘Northern Mysteries’ (North America ones). In the category of ‘Southern Mysteries’, Hand inserted myths such as El Dorado, the Cinnamon forests of Canela, the Casa del Sol and the White King. In the North America myths category, we can find the Seven Cities of Cibola (set in Northern Arizona and New Mexico) and Quivira (in Kansas). Inexplicably, Hand excluded famous New World myths such as the Brazilian Amazons and the Canadian pygmies, but he included myths such as the Temple of the Sun that are in reality part of the Native American culture, and not New World myths. The anthropologist Neil L. Whitehead focused on the three main New World myth-cycles “concerning the riches of *El Dorado*, that is ‘The Golden One’, the *Cannibals* who are eaters of human flesh, and the *Amazons*, or warrior-women” (1992: 53). However, men-eating populations existed in Lesser Antilles and South America, and it is problematic to refer to cannibals as myths in the meaning that we have stated above. As suggested by David Beers Quinn (1976: 638), cannibals can be considered mythical creatures in the classical and medieval traditions, but not in the New World imagination as the existence of men-eating

populations in the Americas was attested to. On the other hand, Christian Kupchik (2008) included the myths of the fountain of youth and Patagonian giants in his list, but he also gave the name of myth to Native American inhabitants that really existed, such as the Omaguas (the Cambeba people living in the Amazon basin) and the Quechua Indian José Kondori.

The aim of this thesis is not to enter into the discussion of how best to catalogue the New World mythology. Instead, it selects three myths which epitomise the ways in which the New World myths bridge the Old World and the New. These three myths (Caribbean and Brazilian Amazons, Patagonian giants and Canadian pygmies) along with many others, have been described as belonging to the process that the Mexican historian Edmundo O’Gorman defined as the “invention of the Americas” (1958), meant in the modern sense we give today to the word ‘invention’. Whilst in many early modern works about the New World ‘invention’ is synonym of ‘discovery’<sup>6</sup>, O’ Gorman used it in an epistemological sense of designating something that did not exist before. His historical-philosophical analysis deconstructed the ethnocentric idea of the discovery, and proposed instead an innovative cultural perspective culminating in the ‘ontological disintegration’ or ‘self-liquidation’ of Europe. The inventor of the new world was, in O’ Gorman’s opinion, Amerigo Vespucci, and Europeans shape the Americas in their image, bringing all their cultural baggage to bear upon it. The New World myths can therefore be intended as the products of an historical process bringing together cultural expectations and hermeneutical repertoire in what can be defined an act of agency. Starting from O’ Gorman, the theme of the “invention” of the Americas has attracted a huge academic attention, creating two main schools of thought. The first one, supported by scholars

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Nicolò Scillacio’s *De insulis meridiani atque indici maris nuper inventis* (1494) and Hernán Pérez de Oliva’s *Historia de la invención de las Indias* (c. 1528). The German cartographer Martin Waldseemüller wrote in his *Quattuor navigationes* (1507) that the fourth region in the world *inventata est* by Vespucci. Tommaso Campanella in *La città del sole* (1602) defines Isabella I of Castile “inventrice del mondo nuovo”.

such as Fernando Ainsa (1984), Jacques Derrida (1987) and Walter Mignolo (1993, 2005) to name just three, considers the New World in opposition to Europe, as a utopian world created by the expectations of the Europeans who aimed to explore “nouveaux *modes* d’existence, de nouvelles manières d’appréhender, de projeter ou d’habiter le monde” (Derrida, 1987: 41) [new ways of living, new ways of learning, of projecting or inhabiting the world]. Europeans projected onto the New World their own aspirations and fears, creating a distorted image of their own reality. The second school of thought, sustained by Germán Arciniegas (1990), Peter Mason (1990) and José Rabasa (1993) amongst others, claims that the New World was, instead, a reproduction or prolongation of the Old World; and that the entire process of invention was a self-discovery, rather than an encounter with the “others”. In both cases, scholars have shown that having been created by Europeans, the New World mythology does not only give us information about the perception that Europeans had of the New World, but also insights into European society. As claimed by the father of modern anthropology Claude Lévi-Strauss, myths and stories provide an explanation of the reality that created them (1958; 1962). The New World mythology is anomalous as it was not created by the populations living in the Americas, but by ‘foreigners’ who aimed to conquer them and that, as such, brought to the Americas their own world. For example, Amazons could be interpreted as an answer to early modern European androcracy, representing the masculine anxiety of dealing with free-standing capable women. In the same way, the fountain of youth could represent the hope of extended life expectancy, as did the elixir of life, or the philosopher’s stone, while the giants, as noted by Giovanni Bossi, show “la relatività di ciò che è *grande* e di ciò che è *piccolo* [...] e la possibilità di *ingigantire* ogni desiderio” (2003: 12). As such, the study of these myths is also helpful to investigate the early modern European society. In the next

chapters we will see how the use that poets made of the New World myths can give us information about their perception of the New World, but also about their own society.

### **Bringing the New World mythology back home**

New World myths were transported back to Europe via a range of literary, visual and material vehicles: historiographical accounts, maps, woodcuts, engravings, collectable objects and poems. One of the original discoveries of this thesis is, in fact, that the epic poets who integrated the New World mythology into their works drew on sources that were not merely literary. It is well known that the historiographical and pseudohistoriographical accounts about the New World describing the *mirabilia* discovered by explorers and conquistadores during their voyages provided inspiration for epic poetry. Works such as Peter Martyr d'Anghiera's *Decades de orbe novo* (1511, 1516 and 1530), Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo's *Sommario della naturale e generale istoria dell'Indie occidentali* (1526) (later included in the *Historia natural y general de las Indias*, 1535), and Antonio Pigafetta's *Relazione del primo viaggio attorno al mondo* (1524) are hugely influential on the New World literature of Europe. A large amount of these works was included in the third volume of Giovanni Battista Ramusio's *De navigatione et viaggi* (1556), which is a fundamental compendium for the identification of these myths.<sup>7</sup> As proved by numerous scholars such as Jerome Randall Barnes (2007: 7) and Toni Veneri (2012), Ramusio did not only compile this travel compendium for personal curiosity, but also actively engaged with the material he collected. In the introduction of the volume addressed to Fracastoro, Ramusio himself used a New

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<sup>7</sup> The third volume of the *Navigazioni et viaggi* (1556) is included in the fifth and sixth books of Marica Milanese's edition (1978-1988).



World myth, that of Atlantis, to convince the Venetians to take a more active part in the New World explorations to maintain their maritime hegemony (1985, V, pp. 5-17). The myth was used by the historian as an empirical tool to prove that Atlantis was not an allegorical fable as suggested by Marsilio Ficino, but that the New World already existed in the classical tradition and was, therefore, legitimately conquerable by Venice (Binotti, 1992: 90; Pirillo, 2013: 39-40). Through the Atlantis myth, Ramusio was drawing the attention of the Venetians to the fact that it was not enough to be self congratulatory about whatever connections they might have had to the ‘invention’ of the Americas; they should use the information they had to further their economic interests (Ambrosini, 1992; Horodowich, 2005). Some of the epic poems studied here pick up the New World myths for similarly propagandistic reasons.

Less attention is paid to the influence of cartographic and iconographical representations of America on European literature depicting the New World. Yet the earliest mapmakers of the Age of Discovery were amongst the first and the most imaginative purveyors of the newly discovered lands that bridged the New and the Old. Like the chroniclers, their maps and images were often politically inspired and expressed their colonial intentions as much as their vision of the lands then described. Following Herodotus’s precept that wonderful creatures always inhabited the farthest part of the world (*Histories*, III, 106, 1), the first cartographers of the New World used the same mythological creatures depicted by their predecessors in Africa and Asia to fill the blank and unknown lands of the new continent (Colin, 1988; Washburn, 1991). Located at the boundary of the human and animal conditions as well as at the boundary of the world, the Herodotean and Plinian ‘monstrous’ races were used to represent the ‘others’ living in the newly discovered lands. As their monstrosity was usually attributed to the extreme climate experienced in the torrid and polar zones, they were relocated in the New World cartography following the theories of climatic determinism

(Meslin, 1988; Cattaneo, 2009). In the first map representing the New World depicted by Juan de la Cosa (1500), classical myths are represented just in Africa and Asia, while in the Americas only St. Christopher, allegory of Columbus, is represented (fig. 3). However, in the world map made by the Ottoman geographer Piri Reis in 1513 and based on a map drawn by Columbus himself,<sup>8</sup> blemmyae, cynocephalis and unicorns are moved to the New World (fig. 4). In numerous maps, engravings and woodcuts depicted in the following years, America is crowded with mythological creatures usually copied from medieval images. Some of the most updated illustrations displaying New World myths are the Vallard Atlas (1547) (fig. 5), Desceliers 1550 planisphere (fig. 6), the Caspar Vopel's 1558 world map *Nova et integra universalisque orbis totius [...] descriptio* printed in Venice by Andrea Valvassore (fig. 7), and the *Americae relectio* series of engravings by Stradanus. The meanings of these myths in early modern cartography have been considered different from the meanings of the monsters and mythical creatures that populated medieval cartography. As shown by Chet Van Duzer, the presence of mythological creatures on Renaissance maps was a way to encourage the conquest, making these unknown places less threatening. According to the map historian, while in Medieval cartography sea creatures indicated the danger of the ocean, in Renaissance cartography they communicated the control that the Europeans were able to achieve over those creatures (2013b). This is made more evident by the fact that almost all the maps containing representations of New World myths are diplomatic charts, not intended for nautical use. Whatever their intended or unintended purposes, maps left an indelible mark on the poets who embraced the New World in their fictions.

Also underexamined in previous scholarship is the influence on the New World mythology of the cabinets of curiosities that flourished in all the major European courts

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<sup>8</sup> See pp. 116-117.

during the 1550s. New World myths appear in these cabinets in the form of the collected objects. The artefacts coming from the West Indies or connected in some way with the Americas were incorporated in the “exotic” sections together with Asian and African products, becoming keynote pieces of the *Kunst-* and *Wunderkammern*. They were usually catalogued under broad general rubrics with little attention to the ethnography of the populations producing them, and the adjectives ‘Indian’ and ‘Moorish’ were more a synonym of ‘curious’ rather than a geographical indicator (Feest, 1993: 3). However, Jessica Keating and Lia Markey have shown that while the categories used in the inventories were general, the exact origin of the exotic items in the *Kunstammer* was significant for the collectors. Examining the cabinet of curiosities created by Cosimo I de’ Medici in the Palazzo Vecchio, Keating and Markey showed, for example, how the duke “sought to make sense of the world represented in his collection” (2011: 289) through the geographical origins of the collected artefacts. The same has been proved by Deanna MacDonald (2002) working on the cabinet of curiosities created by Margaret of Austria. The scholar indicated how the duchess used the American artefacts preserved in her collection as a geographical indicator of the Hapsburg domain.

As shown by Detlef Heikamp (1976), American objects present in the collections represented and evoked for the most part the Native American mythologies and cultures of the pre-Columbian populations who created them. However, they were also interpreted by the Europeans as confirmation of the existence of behemoth creatures in the New World. Cosimo I believed he owned the horn of a Canadian unicorn, that was in reality the tusk of an Arctic whale (Scalini, 1997: 147); while Peter Martyr was delighted to keep in his house for a few days the enormous femoral bone believed to belong to a Patagonian giant (Gerbi, 1975: 67). As such, these objects are able to demonstrate what it was that interested the collectors,

agents and purchasers of the New World curiosities (Collet, 2007). Whilst these American objects usually alluded to colonial triumphs and the ambitions of the princes and scholars possessing them, they also prove the curiosity for the mythical creatures populating the newly discovered lands. They constitute an integral part of what Krzysztof Pomian (1990) defined the early modern ‘culture of curiosity’, a condition that Alexander Marr (2006) indissolubly connected with knowledge. It is possible that this enterprise of knowledge pushed the collectors to introduce not only authentic Native American booties in their cabinets, but also works of art representing the New World produced by local European artists. These works would have given the *Kunstkammer* a more complete insight into the world that they aimed to represent, confirming the collectors own world-views. The image of the Native Americans as cynocephali was, for example, proposed by Benvenuto Cellini through his three dog-heads in agate, amethyst and onyx inventoried as ‘Indian heads’ in the Palazzo Vecchio’s *Kunstkammer* (Heikamp and Anders, 1972: 13; Turpin, 2006: 71)<sup>9</sup>; whilst Lodovico Buti represented Mexican warriors in the Sala dell’Armeria of the Uffizi Gallery (1588, fig. 8; Kohl, 1982: 37; Shelton, 1994: 188-189). The same material was sometimes indicative of the origin of the New World myths. One of the best examples of this trend is probably the Seventeenth-Century Brazilian coconut cup preserved in the collection of the German naturalist Alexander von Humboldt. An Amazon was carved on the surface of this coconut cup by an unidentifiable Dutch artist active at the court of Johan Mauritius of Nassau (Spénlé, 2011). The Amazon woman is in this case represented on an artefact coming from the same place, Brazil, where the New World myth of the Amazons was located.

One of the aims of this thesis is to show how the words, images and objects collected by early modern Europeans made their way into epic poetry in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-

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<sup>9</sup> These sculptures are now preserved in the Mineralogical and Lithological Museum in Florence.

Century Italy. The poets studied here used New World myths to inject a new element of wonder into a familiar curiosity, using them as a source of creative inspiration. These myths fired up their imaginations, and allowed them to introduce new characters into their narratives, which combined elements of the fantastic with a strong dose of verisimilitude and relevance. Previous studies have explored the influence of classical myths on the New World mythology as it appears in European poetry. Israel Villalba de la Güida (2012: 136) noticed, for example, how some Greek myths were applied to the description of the discovery process. The sailors and knights of the Columbian poems were usually compared to the heroes of the Trojan Cycle (Achilles, Hector, Ulysses), the figure of Columbus considered an allegory of Hercules, and the Native Americans associated to negative characters such as Thyestes, Lycaon and Circe. My study, by contrast, focuses on the impact of first-hand accounts of the New World on epic poetry and on how the epic poets make use of the New World materials for their own ends.

What was the relationship of influence between the various New World materials? Historiographical accounts, maps, ephemera, collectible objects and literature influenced each other in the invention and use of the New World mythology, though the usual trend is to consider the historiographical accounts as the original sources for all others. It is true that, in lieu of direct observation, poets referred to the historical travel compendia in order to give verisimilitude to their works, even when describing legendary events and mythological creatures. Tasso's precept of 'verisimilar marvellous'<sup>10</sup> was scrupulously followed by the

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<sup>10</sup> "Diversissime sono, signor Scipione, queste due nature, il meraviglioso e 'l verisimile; ed in guisa diverse, che sono quasi contrarie tra loro; nondimeno l'una e l'altra nel poema è necessaria; ma fa mestieri che arte di eccellente poeta sia quella che insieme le accoppi; il che, se ben'è stato sin'ora fatto da molti, nissuno è (ch'io mi sappia) il quale insegni come si faccia; anzi, alcuni uomini di somma dottrina, veggendo la ripugnanza di queste due nature, hanno giudicato quella parte ch'è verisimile ne' poemi non essere meravigliosa, né quella ch'è meravigliosa, verisimile; ma che nondimeno, essendo ambedue necessarie, si debba or seguire il verisimile, ora il meraviglioso, di maniera che l'una a l'altra

Seventeenth-Century poets writing about the New World, who aimed to emulate Tasso and produce works in line with the poetic rules applied in the *Gerusalemme liberata* (Aloè, 2011: 53-54). As such they needed to anchor their descriptions to the most authoritative works available: the written accounts. The similarities between the poems in the use of some myths should not be therefore attributed to plagiarism as suggested by Carlo Steiner (1891: 50), but to the use poets made of the same historical sources. Like the poets, mapmakers were also abundantly influenced by travel narratives and cosmographies in locating New World myths on their maps, as well as painters and sculptors that produced numerous allegorical images of America and its inhabitants based on such accounts (Padrón, 2004; Rubiés, 2009). However, the preponderant role of historical records in the process of invention has been recently reconsidered. Lia Markey (2008; 2012) and Surekha Davies (2009) have shown, for example, that early modern mapmakers and artists often turned away from the voyage accounts in their representations of New World myths, in order to produce propagandistic or ethnographical discourses. As effectively summarised by Benjamin Schmidt, “we take for granted the primacy of textual sources, yet this can often mean neglecting other less accessible (and therefore less apparent) media – and the trajectories of iconic transfer” (2011: 37). In addition, literary scholars have proven that early modern historians borrowed from poetry in order to capture the attention of their readers. Mariarosa Scaramuzza Vidoni (1994: 171) showed, for example, that the Sicilian historian Nicolò Scillacio in his *De insulis meridiani atque indici maris nuper inventis* (1494) referred to Virgil’s *Aeneid* and other classical poems to describe storms and exotic places in the Americas. And the first official historian of the New World Peter Martyr borrowed from both the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid* in his *De orbe novo*, as indicated by Stelio Cro (1992: 57) and Giuseppe Mazzotta (2012: 11). The literary figure of

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non ceda, ma l'una da l'altra sia temperata” (*Discorsi dell’arte poetica*, 6-7). On the “verisimilar marvellous” see in particular Biow (1996: 123-154).

the *homo sylvester* [wild man] present in Pulci's *Morgante* (V, 38-45) as well as in European art and folklore, was often applied to the description of Native Americans, and used as early as in the 1505 edition of Vespucci's *Mondus novus* (Honour, 1975: 56; Colin, 1987).

One of the clearest examples that indicate the complex crossing of different sources in the invention of the New World mythology is possibly the figure of the hippogriff. It is worth dedicating further attention to this figure to give a better sense of the interaction of or synergy between sources in epic literature. The hippogriff is a mythical half-griffin half-horse creature poetically described for the first time by Ludovico Ariosto in the *Orlando furioso* (*O.f.*, IV, 18-19). Scholars have suggested different interpretations on the origin of this animal, linking it in particular to the winged horse Pegasus, and to the Vulture-dragoons described by Lucian of Samosata in his *True Story* (I, ch. 11). Edgard Blochet even argued that Ariosto could have been inspired by the figure of the Islamic buraq, the winged creature who carried Muhammad and other prophets to the heavens (1899: 220-222). These theses were persuasively refused by Salomon Reinach, who claimed that the buraq, as well as Pegasus and the Vulture-dragoons, were visually very different from Ariosto's hippogriff (1920: 231).<sup>11</sup> The French archaeologist, in turn, suggested that the hippogriff could have had a Latin origin, Ariosto having had in mind Virgil's Eighth Eclogue (1920: 233). In this work, the shepherd Damon laments for the loss of his beloved Nysa, who is going to marry the loathsome Mopsus: "Mopso Nysa datur: quid non speremus amantes? / iungentur iam grypes equis, aevoque sequenti / cum canibus timidi venient ad pocula damnæ" [To Mopsus is Nysa given! For what may we lovers not look? *Griffins now shall be joined with mares*, and, in the age to come, the timid deer shall come with hounds to drink] (*Eclogue*, VIII, 26-28, my italics). Griffins and

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<sup>11</sup> Pegasus is a winged horse, the Vulture-dragoons are men riding large vultures, and the buraq is described as a flying creature having the body of a horse, the face of a woman and the tail of a peacock.

horses were believed to be mortal enemies in the classical tradition, and their incompatibility is used by Damon as a metaphor to declare that nothing should be considered impossible in love, as Mopsus was able to win over Nysa against the odds. For Reinach, Ariosto borrowed from Virgil solely for amusement: “Il [Arioste] ne l’a pas fait sérieusement, mais comme toujours, en manière de jeu [...]; il s’est diverti en s’autorisant d’un texte qui devait être familier à ses lecteurs” (1920: 233). But if the debt to Virgil’s hemistich is true, the hippogriff could also be considered a symbol of the love story between the Christian Bradamante and the Saracen Ruggiero, that was considered impossible in Matteo Maria Boiardo’s *Inamoramento de Orlando* because of the characters’ different faiths and status. A love that the hippogriff itself contributes to obstruct by kidnapping Ruggiero (*O.f.*, IV, 46); and that, as the ‘impossible’ love between Nysa and Mopsus, will end with a marriage (*O.f.*, XLVI, 73-75).

Although Reinach’s thesis is convincing and has been adopted as the standard explanation of the origin of Ariosto’s hippogriff, an examination of cartographical sources allows us to introduce an alternative to existing scholarship. In the *Orlando furioso*, hippogriffs are located in the Riffean hills, legendary mountains in the Sarmatian area identifiable with the Urals: “che nei monti Rifei vengon, ma rari, / molto di là dagli ghiacciati mari” (*O.f.*, IV, 18, 7-8). In the Genoese planisphere of 1457 that Enrico Cerulli (1932: 28) has shown to be one of the maps used by Ariosto to delineate the geography of his poem, a hippogriff appears in today’s Russia (fig. 9 and 10).<sup>12</sup> Scholars have usually considered this creature to be a griffin, but upon close inspection of its depiction we notice that the rear part of the animal is not a lion as for griffins, but a horse as for hippogriffs.<sup>13</sup> The

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<sup>12</sup> The geographical sources used by Ariosto are further considered in the Patagonian giants section. See pp. 120-121. An Asian hippogriff appears also in the Atlas Miller (1519).

<sup>13</sup> Contrary to the griffins of the classical tradition represented with the head of an eagle and the body of a lion, the anterior part of the hippogriff is a griffin and the rear part a horse: “Non è finto il destrier,



animal is, indeed, represented with the typical tail hair of a horse, and also rear hooves that are thin and fitted akin to those of a mare. As such, Ariosto may well have been influenced by a cartographical source in the description of his hybrid creature, and in locating it in the same area where the hippogriff appear on the Genoese planisphere. The cartographic origin of the hippogriff could be as such considered as an alternative to the poetic school of thought introduced by Reinach.

Ariosto's *Furioso*, in turn, could have influenced the cartographers who mapped the Americas after the publication of this poem. Two hippogriffs located in America appear indeed in the world map drawn by the French cartographer Pierre Desceliers (1546, fig. 11). Since Ariosto was the first to describe a hippogriff in the New World, it is possible that Desceliers could have been influenced by the *Orlando furioso*. Scholars such as Douglas Biow (1996) and Ita Mac Carthy (2007a) have noticed in fact that the flight of Ruggiero on the hippogriff retraces the route followed by Columbus to reach the New World. As shown by Biow, Ariosto borrowed the expression "per linea dritta" (*Of.*, VI, 19, 2) in describing the route followed by the hippogriff from a letter sent to Ariosto's patron Ercole I d'Este by his correspondent Annibale Gennaro in 1493. Gennaro indicated with "per dritta linea" exactly the route followed by Columbus in his voyage (Biow, 1996: 112). Unlike the griffins that were often located in the Americas in the travel accounts<sup>14</sup>, hippogriffs are instead never mentioned. It is therefore possible to retrace the setting of these mythical creatures in America as a consequence of the popularity acquired by the *Furioso*, a sign that literature could also

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ma naturale, / ch'una giumenta generò d'un Grifo: / simile al padre avea la piuma e l'ale, / li piedi anteriori, il capo e il grifo; / in tutte l'altre membra pareva quale / era la madre" (*Of.*, IV, 18, 1-6).

<sup>14</sup> Ferdinand Columbus claimed that the inhabitants of Cuba used to live in the trees because "procediese de miedo a los grifos que hay en aquel país" [they were scared of the griffins living in that country] (2012: 235). Oviedo believed to have seen a griffin in Peru, as well as Pedro de Cieza de León who wrote of "condores grandisimos, que casi parecen grifos" (*Crónica del Perú*, cap. CXIII). See Magasich-Airola & De Beer (2006: 159).

have contributed to the relocation of myths from their classical location to the New World, and influenced other 'media'. The intertextual substratum of the media containing New World myths is rich and varied, and it is only rarely that one source is privileged over another. In this thesis I will show how the problematic crossing of the sources used to describe New World myths can change our reading of the poems, as the myths should be interpreted also taking into consideration how they appear in the different 'media' used by the poets to describe them.

### **The New World myths in Italy**

Italy played a particular role in the development of the New World mythology, though this fact is rarely acknowledged as scholars focus on Spain, England and Portugal. Though no Italian fleets left for the New World and Italian rulers held no colonies,<sup>15</sup> Italian navigators played major roles in the New World conquest and Italian writers brought news of those conquests back home. Talk of an 'Italian' invention of the Americas would of course be anachronistic because of the lack of an Italian national identity in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.<sup>16</sup> Instead of just one 'Italian' invention of the Americas, there were many versions of the New World emerging from across the patchwork of Italian nation states of the period. American historian Patricia Seed (2001) claimed that there were different 'inventions' for every colonising country, referring in particular to England, Spain and Portugal: it is equally time that there were different inventions for every state constituting

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<sup>15</sup> The only attempt to settle an Italian colony in America was made by Ferdinando I de' Medici in 1608. See p. 89.

<sup>16</sup> On the perception of Italy as a no-nation in the New World invention see Cro (1992), Cachey (2002) and Hester (2008).

nowadays Italy. A particular role was played by Florence, Venice, Ferrara, Parma and Rome, which operated a conscious crafting of their own identities through the New World enterprise (Crovetto, 1994). Italian states did not officially participate in voyages to the New World, but individual Italians wholeheartedly embraced any opportunity to be part of it. The poets studied in this thesis are prime examples of the desire to be involved and of the tendency to use the New World discoveries to promote their own regions. The figures of the Genoese Columbus and the Florentine Vespucci, for example, are used frequently as a form of patriotism to give the idea that Italian states also had a pivotal role in the construction of America. Spanish and Portuguese poets used New World myths easily as nationalistic tools because of the preponderant role Spain and Portugal played in the process of invention.<sup>17</sup> However, the Italian situation is particularly significant because Italians needed to adapt New World myths to their political and economic lack of engagement with the American reality. Mapping the New World, and sharing its discovery as Italians did, resonated with the humanist project of taking literary possession of the newly discovered lands where no political possession existed (Beccaria, 1985; Cosgrove, 1992; Cachey, 2002). This literary colonisation is epitomised in epic poetry, and the New World myths acquire specific values and meanings therein. It is these values and meanings that this thesis seeks to explore.

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<sup>17</sup> Spanish epic production about the New World includes Garcí Rodríguez de Montalvo's *Las sergas de Esplandián* (1510), Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga's *Araucana* (1569, 1578 and 1589), Lasso de la Vega's *Cortés valeroso y Mexicana* (1588), Juan de Castellanos's *Elegías de varones ilustres de Indias* (1589), Pedro de Oña's *Arauco domado* (1596), Saavedra Guzmán's *El peregrino indiano* (1599) and Martín del Barco Centenera's *Argentina y conquista del Río de la Plata* (1602). For these poems see in particular Arce (1982); Bellini (2003). For the use of these poems as a tool to construct the Spanish idea of empire see Padrón (2004). As for Portugal, in these years Luís de Camões wrote his masterpiece *Os Lusíadas* (1555), considered the most important epic poem of the entire Portuguese literature. It celebrates the Portuguese early modern explorations, including the New World.

## Chapter two

### THE QUEENDOM OF THE AMERICAN AMAZONS<sup>1</sup>

The myth of a population of warrior women was one of the first classical myths to be transported to the New World. In a famous letter to the Spanish finance minister Luis de Santángel, Columbus reported a population of warrior women living in ‘Matitino’, or present-day Martinique, the first island encountered when coming from Spain. News of the American Amazons spread widely in Italy during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, but poets continued for a long time to locate the warrior women of their poems in Asia and Africa, following the classical and medieval traditions. Why did they ignore the new ‘evidence’ coming from America? Could this lack of engagement with the myth be attributed to the anxiety created by the discovery of a troublesome gynaecocracy? It is possible that poets simply preferred to continue locating the legendary Amazons in a ‘familiar’ environment, and that they considered the traditional setting of the Amazons as a reassuring and protective component. Whatever the case may be, this caution persisted even when the poets finally introduced the American warrior women into their works in the 1580s. Initially, they were careful to adhere to the historical accounts they had to hand and to quote them verbatim. This implies a continue reticence about making the myth their own.

This chapter explores the reasons for the delayed introduction of the American Amazons into Italian epic poetry. Before presenting its hypotheses, however, it introduces the myth of the American Amazons, giving an overview of its diffusion in early modern Italy and

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<sup>1</sup> Part of this chapter has been presented at the ‘New Perspectives on Gender in Italian Culture and Society’ symposium organised by Francesca Calamita and Alex Standen at the Victoria Univeristy of Wellington, New Zealand, in February 2013. The paper presented at the symposium has been later published by the journal *altrelettere*: Aloè, 2014.

showing how this myth was one of the first and most popular classical myths to be introduced into the New World. The chapter proceeds with a discussion of the influence that the iconographical representation of America had on the introduction of American Amazons in epic poetry. It also suggests why this myth was soon eclipsed after a short 'golden age', and considers the colonial game played by the main European powers of the time. The last part of the chapter argues that poets used the myth of the American Amazons to take part in two of the most controversial debates of their time: the *querelle des femmes*, and the controversy about the nature of Native Americans that began with the Valladolid debate. Being both women and indigenous people, the American Amazons represented the ideal subject to investigate the role of women and Native Americans, focusing in particular on questions related to identity and nationalism.

### **Introducing the American Amazons**

The myth of the Amazon has been part of the Western tradition for millennia. Starting from Homer's *Iliad* (III, 184-189; VI, 186) and passing through the works of authors such as Herodotus (*Histories*, IV, 110-118), Diodorus Siculus (*Bibliotheca historica*, II-IV), Plutarch (*Life of Theseus*, 26-28) and Statius (*Thebaid*, XII) to name but a few, Amazons have always been considered emblematic figures. In the Fifth Century BC, Herodotus called them *androktones* ('killers of men'), for their habit of killing their sons, and keeping just their daughters to perpetuate their stock. This was just one of the numerous mythemes that would have composed the so called 'saga' of the Amazons, as Stefano Andres defined it (2001: 163-165). Particular features of the Amazons were that they lived in communities of women, used men just to procreate, were devoted to warlike activities, were self-governed, and lived in a

territory rich with gold. They hated the masculine genre, and cauterised their right breast to better hold the bow. Their idiosyncratic reproductive control, martial prowess, sexual habits and violence has been used by authors and scholars of every century to speak of broader concerns of desire, patriarchal order, identity, gender, domesticity and anxiety. In her study of the different interpretations of the myth of the Amazons throughout the centuries, Batya Weinbaum (1999) showed how the myth was both used to empower women, and at other times used by men to disempower them. The Amazons embodied hybridity, ambiguity and, as we will see, possession.

The queendom of the Amazons has been placed in numerous locations, with the particularity of always being located in the furthest parts of the known world at the time. If in the Hellenistic period the most exotic and barbaric places were considered the Euxine Sea (Black Sea) and Scythia, the extension of the *oecumene* contributed to its continuous reallocation in new scenarios. As geographical knowledge increased, it was gradually moved to a more liminal position. As such, it was found in Caucasus, Scandinavia, Libya, Congo, Ethiopia, Chaldea, India, the islands of the Ocean Sea, and with the discovery/invention of the Americas it was also moved to the New World.<sup>2</sup> As mentioned above, the myth of the Amazons was one of the first classical myths transported overseas (Sánchez, 1991; Magasich-Airola & De Beer, 2006). That famous letter from Columbus to Luis de Santángel described the population of warrior women living in Martinique as having no female habits or costumes and as entirely dedicated to military pursuits:

Matinino que es la primera yslla, partiendo de España para las Indias, que se falla, en la qual no ay hombre ninguno, ellas no usan exercicio femeníl, salvo arcos y flechas, como los sobredichos, de cañas, y se arman y cobigan con launas de arambre, de que tienen mucho (Columbus, 2011: 13).

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<sup>2</sup> A torrent of books has been written on the myth of the Amazons. For the transposition of the myth in different locations see in particular Samuel (1976); Salmonson (1991).

[Martinique, the first isle to be met with coming from Spain to the Indies, where there are no men. These women have no feminine occupation, but use bows and arrows of cane like those before mentioned, and cover and arm themselves with plates of copper, of which they have a great quantity] (Columbus, 2010a: 19).

As suggested by Franco Marengo (2009), Columbus possibly needed to make the New World appear more familiar; he achieved this by applying the myth of the Amazons to the Americas. The presence of the Female Island in Marco Polo and John Mandeville's works that he consulted during his voyages (Bellini and Martini, 1992; Wallis, 1992) would have helped him in such domestication, supported by his own certainty of having reached the Far East where the Amazons were formally believed to be located in these medieval works.

The letter to Santángel was dated 15<sup>th</sup> February 1493, and it was immediately printed in Barcelona by Pedro Posa, translated into Latin by the notary Leandro de Cosco (*De insulis nuper inventis*, 29<sup>th</sup> April 1493) and widespread all over Europe (March & Passman, 1993: 298-299; Bottiglieri, 1996: 283-284). As such, news of the existence of a population of militant women in the newly discovered territories was already in the public domain in the last years of the Fifteenth Century, the letter being soon considered a 'best seller'. The identification of these viragoes with the classical Amazons was also immediate, as suggested by the very name of the island Matanino composed of the words "matar" (kill) and "niño" (male child) (De Armas Wilson, 1997: 215). This could have been interpreted as a reference to the classical Amazonian custom of killing their sons for matriarchal reasons. As reported by Bartolomé de Las Casas, Columbus noticed right away that these women "debían tener las costumbres que se cuentan de las Amazonas" [should have the manners that were attributed to the Amazons] (*Historia de las Indias*, ch. 111) and the theory of the presence of Amazons in the New World was soon accepted by numerous historians. The most famous include Raffaele Volterrano (1506), Peter Martyr (1516), Juan Díaz (1518), Bartolomé de Las Casas (1523),

Antonio Pigafetta (1524), and Benedetto Bordone (1528) (Bognolo, 1990). The 1542 meeting of Francisco de Orellana with the Amazons on the banks of the river that bore their name confirmed the existence of these mythical warrior women in the Americas. Gaspar de Carvajal documented this event in his *Relación del nuevo descubrimiento del famoso Río Grande de las Amazonas* (1542), and Sebastian Cabot depicted Brazilian Amazons in his world map (1544, fig. 12 and 13). After the exploration of Orellana even Oviedo, who at the beginning excluded the presence of Amazons in the New World, accepted the transmigration of the myth. Initially, the Spanish historian questioned the nature of the warrior women met by the Europeans: “los cristianos comenzaron a llamar amaçonas, sin lo ser, impropriamente” as “aquestas mujeres flecheras de quien aquí tratamos no se cortan la teta ni se la queman” [Christians started improperly calling them Amazons, but these archer women that we are considering here neither cut off their breast nor burn it] (*Historia general y natural de las Indias*, VI, 33). Contrary to their classical ancestors who used to practise mastectomy on their right breast to better hold the bow, the American warriors used in fact to keep both their breasts, causing confusions in their identification. However, in the letter addressed to Pietro Bembo reporting the exploration of the Amazon River (1543),<sup>3</sup> Oviedo appeared convinced of the identification of the Brazilian warrior women with the classical Amazons, and was one of the first historians to attest their existence in South America (Asensio, 1949: 34).

The presence of Amazons in the New World was also supported by the Ptolemaic assumption of every monster having its own avatar in the sea, and in the different areas of the terrestrial globe. The Amazons, considered one of the Plinian monstrous races for their abominable costumes, were included in this scheme. In his book *Les Singularitez de la*

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<sup>3</sup> This letter was translated into Italian by Bembo himself to be included in Ramusio's *Navigazioni et viaggi* with the title *La navigazione del grandissimo fiume Maragnón* (1988, IV).



*France Antarctique* (1557), the Franciscan friar André Thevet pointed out the essentiality for every continent of having its own Amazons:

Lon trouve par les histoires qu'il y'a eu trois sortes d'Amazones, semblables, pour le moins differentes de lieux & d'habitations. Les plus anciennes ont esté en Afrique, entre les quelles ont esté les Gorgones, qui avoient Meduse pour Roynes. Les autres Amazones ont esté en Scythie pres le fleuve de Tanais: les quelles depuis ont regné en une partie de l'Asie, pres le fleuve Thermodoon. Et la quatrième sorte des Amazones, sont celles des quelles parlons presentement (1557, LXIII, 124v-125r).

We finde by the histories, that there are iii. sorts of Amazones, differing only in places and dwellings. The most ancient sort were in Affrica, among the which were Gorgonists, that had Maduse for their Queene. The other were in Scythia, neere to the river of Tanais, which since have reigned in a part of Asia, neere to the river of Hermodoon [Thermodon]: and the third [quatrième] sort of Amazones, are those which we do treat of (1971: 65).

In the same way that in the Medieval teratology Amazons were imagined as 'neighbours' of Prester John (Bejczy & Heijkant, 1995), in the new American reality they were located on the road to El Dorado, who himself was modelled on the legendary Oriental king (fig. 14). In the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, numerous explorers and conquistadores navigated along the banks of the Amazon River looking for these mythical women. They were motivated by curiosity, possession, hopes of sponsorship, claims of heroism, desire of wealth and later, by the necessity of finding a way to reach the 'mar del sur' (the Pacific Ocean).

### **An allegory for America?**

Although, as we have seen, the news of the Amazons living in the New World was spread widely in Europe, it was difficult for Italian poets to include this myth in their works.

The Amazons featured in Italian epic poems were usually located in Asia and Africa, notable in the works of Stefano Andres (2001), Frédérique Verrier (2003), and Stefano Jossa (2012), who provided an overview of these poems. The discovery of the Americas was not able to change this trend immediately. The only exception was Dati's *Historia* (1493), where, as we have anticipated, the characterisation of the Amazons is strongly in debt to the description of the warrior women in Columbus's letter. The verses are in fact a verbatim translation of the Latin version of the letter, addressed to the treasurer of the Crown of Aragon Gabriel Sánchez:

Una isola c'è detta Mattanino  
nella qual le donne sole stanno  
e questo iniquo popul gli è vicino  
e a usar con queste spesso vanno;  
ma questo popul tutto feminino  
esercitio di donne mai non fanno  
ma con gli archi traendo tuttavia  
che par per certo una gran fantasia  
(*Historia*, 61)

[Hi sunt qui coeunt cum quibusdam feminis, quae solae insulam Mathenim prima ex Hispana in Indiam trajicientibus inhabitant. Hae autem feminae nullum sui sexus opus exercent: utuntur enim arcubus et spiculis, sicuti de earum conjugibus dixi] (*De insulis Indiae supra Gangem nuper inventis*, 1493: cited in Fernández de Navarrete, 2005: 192).

As suggested by Margaret Tomalin (1982: 255), the cannibals are the ideal spouses of the Amazons in poetry, as they confer an epic trait of exoticism and awe to the warrior women. However, in Dati's *Historia* the Cannibal-Amazon bond, already present in the chronicles, was just a validation of the difficulty of the poet in adapting the new myth of the Amazons to the epic genre. Contrary to the legendary one-breasted Amazons that could be freely used as a literary device, the New World Amazons were considered a possible reality in the years following the discovery, and therefore their role in poetry needed to be carefully

managed. This perception is attested to by Stigliani in his *Mondo nuovo*, where the Europeans “avean stupore interno, / che delle donne Amázeni l’impero / già finto altrove, ora quì fusse vero” (*MN.*, XV, 118, 6-8). This is also the case in Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* (1590), where the poet wonders “who in venturous vassel measured / the Amazons huge river now found true?” (II, 2, 7-8). Dati’s “gran fantasia”, now considered a reality, did not immediately allow poets to treat the New World Amazons as epic characters, but just as a tool to give veracity to the poem. A possible explanation of this literary rejection of the myth of the American Amazons can be identified in the turmoil created by the existence of a population of warrior women in the New World. Whilst Hippolyta, Penthesilea, Thalestris and the other classical and medieval Amazons were considered mere imaginary figures ultimately dominated by men, the new Amazons were unknown, and as such it was unclear whether they would be subject to the same male dominance. As suggested by Giulia Bogliolo Bruna and Alberto Lehmann (1988: 218), they were possibly considered the embodiment of one of the most intimidating fears of the early modern patriarchal society: the gynaeocracy. Basing their description of the New World Amazons on historical repertoires without narrative additions, poets were possibly trying epistemologically to schematise them, making them appear more familiar and less threatening.

A more convincing explanation, however, is given by looking at the poetic treatment of the American Amazons myth outside Italy. The use that European poets made of the myth suggests that the neglect could also be connected to the marginal role played by Italy in the political invention of the Americas. In Spain, the country that led the process of discovery, Garcí Rodríguez de Montalvo was immediately able to transform the American Amazons into fictional swordbearing women appropriate for the chivalric genre. In *Las sergas de Esplandián* (ca. 1496), the queen of the Amazons Calafia and her companions are located on

the phantom island of California, set in the “diestra mano de las Indias [...] muy llegada a la parte del Parayso terrenal” [on the right hand of the Indies very close to the side of the terrestrial Paradise] (Ch. 157. English translation in Hale, 1945: 6). According to numerous scholars such as Irving Albert Leonard (1992: 40), María Rosa Lida de Malkiel (1975: 214), William T. Little (1987: 23-24) and Emilio J. Sales Dasí (1998: 151), this island should be considered as one of the Caribbean islands discovered by Columbus during his voyages. Montalvo’s island is in fact near to the Earthly Paradise that Columbus located in Venezuela, and the description of the Amazons in the poem resembles that of the warrior women in Columbus’s *Journal*. As such Calafia and the Amazons in *Las sergas*, who are protagonists of numerous *romanzeschi* episodes, can be considered American, providing crucial insights into the Spanish views of the New World. As suggested by Alison Taufer (1991), they were possibly built on the image of the Native Americans ready to subjugate themselves to Spain either politically and religiously. In addition, the transmigration of the Amazons from the Old to the New World will be explicitly indicated in Feliciano de Silva’s *Lisuarte de Grecia* (1514), the seventh book in the Amadís de Gaula cycle. Here the classical Amazon Pintiquinestra, “señora de la gente menguada de tetas” [queen of the cauterised people] joins Calafia in California, moving to America with all her companions (*LdG.*, ch. 52).

The difference between Spain and Italy in the domestication of the New World Amazons would indicate that Italian difficulty in dealing with the myth was not solely cultural, but political as well. We can see a clear pattern of this dichotomy emerging from the reading of the myth as a form of possession of the territories that the Amazons represented or occupied. As suggested by Diana De Armas Wilson, the Amazons

were part of the carry-on baggage of the would-be conquistador. They were ritually invoked - one might say *installed* – as a staple impediment that had to be dealt with before any land could be possessed. Amazons were a symbol, in the grammar of imperialism, for what used to be called “virgin territory”. Whether robust black, as in

California, or tall whites, as along the Amazon River, these women were represented as intensely territorial (De Armas Wilson, 1997: 224).

Prior to the Amazons, women were already equated with land that men could conquer and possess, a trope that finds its literary origin in the Homeric figure of Helen/Troy. Scholars such as Annette Kolodny (1975), Peter Stallybrass (1986), Anne McClintock (1995) and numerous others have shown how this woman/territory association has been part of the colonial discourse since ancient time, and that it was present in different societies around the world. The identification of the New World with the indigenous women inhabiting it has been highlighted in particular by Carla Perugini (1993), who provided an insight on how Europeans claimed their possession of the Americas through their control over Native American women. Less studied has been how the Amazons can be considered the feminine *plus ultra* of such a trope. Given their hybridity, the Amazons can be considered the women par excellence to defeat, as they could be attacked either with the sword, or with the member. Theseus warns Hippolyta in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1590s): "I woo'd thee with my sword" (Act 1, Scene 1), where the word 'sword' has an erotic connotation. As such, the Amazons' military defeat or physical 'deficiency' gives the conquistadores the right of take possession of their land, or the land they fight for. Louis Montrose noticed how "the conceptual shift from *the land as woman* to *a land of women*" caused the Amazons to be identified with the political nations they represented (1993: 201). Montrose specifically referred to the Amazons and territories described by Sir Walter Raleigh in his account *The Discovery of the Large, Rich and Beautiful Empire of Guiana* (1596), but the same shift could be already been applied to the Amazons of the classical tradition. In the Greek mythography, marrying or sexually possessing the Amazons, as is the case in the typical conclusion of the Amazonomachies ('battles against the Amazons'), means taking possession of the territories

they represent. By marrying Hippolyta (or in some versions of the story Antiope, Glauce or Melanippe), Theseus takes possession of the Amazonian land in dowry. This is also the case with Hercules; who in his ninth labour takes the girdle of Hippolyta symbolising sovereignty over the land occupied by the Amazons. The story has been connected by numerous scholars to sexual intercourse: to untie the belt of a woman, as Hercules did to Hippolyta, means to physically violate her (Tomalin, 1982: 166; Ruck, 1994: 183; Monaghan, 2010: 224). Even Achilles' necrophilous possession of Penthesilea's cadaver can be interpreted as an allegory of the conquest of Troy by the Greeks.

The possession of the Amazons as an allegory of the colonisation of the territory they represented was applied to Italian medieval and early modern poetry. In Boccaccio's *Teseida delle nozze d'Emilia* (c. 1340-41), Theseus married the queen of the Amazons Hippolyta, and as such the Greeks "preser possessione" of Scythia (*Teseida*, I, 127, 7). In Pulci's *Morgante* (1478), Rinaldo and his brothers defeated the Turkish Amazons guided by Arcalida, and as such were able to 'legitimately' conquer Saliscaglia (*Morgante*, XXII, 168). As noted by Cecilia Latella (2009: 318), the episode has an allegorical erotic meaning highlighted by the words used to describe the battle. Alardo, Guicciardo and Ricciardetto "infilzano", "forano" and "pongono a giacere" the Amazons, using "altro che mani", indicating their sexual engagement with the women. Also in Andrea Stagi's *Amazonida* (1503, but possibly written years before as suggested by Andres, 2012: 9), Hercules and Theseus, sent by King Eurystheus to Anatolia, respectively obtained the Amazonian baldric, symbol of the queendom inhabited by the Amazons, and Hippolyta's hand in marriage (II). This gave the Greeks the right to take possession of the Amazonian queendom, provoking the reaction of the indignant militant women that will later take revenge guided by Penthesilea.

This land-Amazon literary bond was possibly taken into consideration by the Italian poets describing the newly discovered lands overseas. The marginal role played by Italy in the discovery of the Americas could have made the trope unusable for Italians, who figuratively did not have any right to claim possession of the American territories represented by the New World Amazons. Spanish poets were ‘legitimately’ allowed to create characters that ‘possessed’ the New World. For example Calafia (representing America) marries Esplendian’s cousin Talanque (Spain), making him lord of all her properties: “Tú serás mi señor y de todo mi estado, que es un señorío muy grande; y por tu causa aquella isla mudará el estilo que de muy grandes tiempos hasta ahora ha guardado” [Thou shalt be my lord, and the lord of my land, which is a very great kingdom; and, for thy sake, this island shall change the custom which for a very long time it has preserved] (ch. 177. English translation in Hale, 1945: 275-276). Italians were instead forced to maintain their gaze on the East, as they did not have any political right over the New World. This can be considered a possible explanation of why they kept the Asian and African Amazons as protagonists of their works.

One of the most emblematic examples of this trend in the Italian poetic panorama is the episode of the *femine omicide* in the *Orlando furioso* (XIX and XX). Pio Rajna, who to date has presented the most rigorous philological study of the *Furioso*, noticed that these killer-women “non sono Amazzoni; bensì una loro imitazione” (1900: 232). Whilst it is true that Ariosto never refers to these women as ‘Amazons’, it is however evident that they can be easily inserted in this category. As with the Amazons, Ariosto’s man-hating women live in a woman-only community, are “aspre nimiche del sesso virile” (*Of*, XX, 29, 2), and kill their male offspring to preserve the feminine stock. Already in the first English translations of the *Furioso*, such as Sir John Harington’s (1591), the syntagma *femine omicide* is translated as ‘Amazons’: “They call them Amazons that here do dwell, / here women guide, and rule, and

governe all” (XIX, 42, 1-2). Recent scholarships agree with such identification. Eleonora Stoppino defined the queendom of the *femine omicide* a “true Amazonian society” (2012: 58), and Selena Scarsi (2010) and Stefano Jossa (2012) referred to them as Amazons in their analyses of the episode. As such, they can be considered Amazons in this study.

Ariosto located their city in the “golfo di Laiazzo invêr Soria” (*Of*, XIX, 54, 1), the seaport now called Yumurtalık in Turkey, where Marco Polo stopped over before starting his journey to China.<sup>4</sup> For Polo, who undertook his trip at the end of the Thirteenth Century, Turkey was too close and well-known to locate the Amazons, usually placed with the other Plinian monstrous races at the edges of the world. He set his island of women somewhere between India and East Africa (“oltre il Chesmacoran, a cinquecento miglia in alto mare verso mezzodi”, *Il Milione*, ch. 33), in a site that scholars have usually identified as Socotra and its vicinity (Dathorne, 1994: 33). Ariosto’s location of the Amazons in the same place where Polo started his journey indicates his reference to an ancient tradition, when Turkey was still considered the margin of the known world. It is possible that the poet is referring here to the location of the Amazons as it was imagined in the early middle ages, when the stories of Charlemagne and his paladins described in the *Furioso* took place. In the Carolingian world, Amazons were indeed still located in Turkey, where they were located in classical times (Justin, *Historiarum Philippicarum*, II, 4, 12-16; Orosius, *Historiae adversus paganos*, I, 15, 1-6).<sup>5</sup> Their capital city Themyscira was still believed to be built on the banks of the Thermodon (the Terme River).

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<sup>4</sup> “Ancora sappiate che sopra il mare è una villa ch’è nome Laias, la quale è di grande mercatantia; e quivi si sposa tutte le spezierie che vengono di là entro, e li mercatanti di Vinegia e di Genova e d’ogni parti quindi le levano, e li drappi di làe e tutte altre care cose. E tutti li mercatanti che voglio andare infra terra, prende via da questa villa” (*Il Milione*, ch. 19).

<sup>5</sup> See Andres (2011: 15).



Although Ariosto could have merged the geography known at the time of his paladins with the location of his Amazons, this choice is not in line with the rest of the poem. The world described in the *Orlando furioso* is clearly not a medieval world: Angelica returns to China on Portuguese ships (*Of*, XXXVIII, 35, A) evoking Vasco da Gama and Afonso de Albuquerque's discoveries; Ruggiero, as we have seen in the introduction, could be considered a mirror of Columbus; and Astolfo, as shown by Erin McCarthy-King, personifies the "tension between the new world and the old" (2012: 26). In addition, the prophecy of the discovery of the Americas by Andronica (*Of*, XV, 17-22) can be considered a statement of the geographical novelty of Ariosto's own era, as suggested by Eric MacPhail (2001: 33). Ita Mac Carthy claims that Ruggiero shows "the geographical precision and cartographical accuracy of an early modern explorer" (2007a: 399), and as such Turkey should definitely not be considered at the boundary of the world described by Ariosto, due to the poet's early modern geographical agenda.

It is worth asking, then, why he did not locate the Amazons at the edges of his own world. The Estense court where Ariosto produced the *Furioso* was one of the most up-to-date for news about the New World, collecting a high number of maps and documents depicting and describing the newly found lands. Numerous scholars such as Marica Milanesi (1984), Claudio Greppi (1984), Alexandre Dorozslai (1998), Massimo Rossi (2006) and Ita Mac Carthy (2007a) have shown that the poet amply borrowed from this material to give veracity and directness to his poem. In particular, Ariosto seems to have benefitted from the so-called manuscript of Ferrara, a compendium of travelogues and letters about the Americas compiled by the Venetian Alessandro Zorzi between 1501 and 1506.<sup>6</sup> The sylloge includes a letter translated by Zorzi that Columbus sent to his brother Bartholomew, in which the Admiral

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<sup>6</sup> The manuscript is now preserved in the Biblioteca comunale Ariostea in Ferrara, ms. cl. II, 10, 1. See Crinò (1930); Almagià (1936), Laurencich-Minelli (1985), Freire Gomez (2003), Marcos (2012).

described Matanino (Conti, 2011: 39). As such, Ariosto's *femine omicide* could have been easily located close to Alcina's island, in modern day Martinique or Saint Lucia, where the Amazons were located at Ariosto's time.

The reason for this neglect can possibly be found by applying the "land-as-a-woman" reading to the episode. The Amazonian city Alessandretta was named after Alessandra, the daughter of the Amazon Orontea who promulgated the law that was in force in the town. As explained by one of the Amazons to Marfisa, Sansonetto, Astolfo and the others Christian knights, the law stated that the warrior who was able to defeat ten men in duel and please ten women in one night would take territorial possession of the town. The linguistic bond Alessandra/Alessandretta clearly indicates the identification of the Turkish town with the population of Amazons living in it. For Ariosto, as with his predecessors, sexually possessing the Amazons means acquiring their land; and the hero able to do so would have ruled over the entire queendom. This is the case of the courageous and handsome Elbanio who - having had sexual intercourse with Alessandra and having obtained the right to marry her - was appointed "del femineo stuol principe e guida" (*Of.*, XX, 59, 5) becoming the formal ruler of Alessandretta. As shown by Maggie Günsberg (1991: 205), in the town of the *femine omicide* men are still in a relative position of power, and Elbanio is the emblem of this masculine supremacy. Unsurprisingly, he descends from the lineage of Hercules (*Of.*, XX, 36, 4), the Greek hero who, as we have already seen, obtained the queendom of Hippolyta after seducing the Amazonian queen.

As largely discussed by Eduardo Saccone (1974) and Albert Russell Ascoli (1987), Hercules is a constant and crucial presence in the *Furioso*: Orlando is under the sign of Hercules from the very title of the poem inspired by Seneca's *Hercules furens*; and Ruggiero, forefather of the House of Este, is assimilated with the 'Alcide' in numerous verses of the

poem. It is exactly this association between Ruggiero and Hercules that makes scholars such as Remo Ceserani (1996: 137) believe that there could be a correspondence in the poem between the characters linked to the mythological Hercules (Ercole) and Ercole I d'Este, father of Ariosto's patrons Ippolito and Alfonso. In fact, the Este courtier Pietro Andrea de' Bassi composed *Le fatiche di Ercole* - published in 1475 but written almost fifty years before - for the birth of Ercole I, and at the beginning of the *Orlando furioso* Cardinal Ippolito was addressed precisely as "generosa Erculea prole" (*Of.*, I, 3, 1).

In the twentieth canto of Ariosto's poem the Herculean Elbanio, who can be considered a metonymy for the Este family, takes territorial possession of the Turkish Alessandretta. The acquisition of a territory politically occupied by the Ottoman Empire has a precise meaning at Ariosto's time, when the Italian states were fighting various battles against the Turks. Ferrara did not have a prominent role in these battles, but as shown by Giovanni Ricci (2002: 9) and Jo Ann Cavallo (2013: 12) the Este state was deeply influenced by the political climate present in the war-torn peninsula. And the *Orlando furioso*, as largely highlighted by Pia Schwarz Lausten (2014), reflected this climate. One of the main themes of the *Furioso* is the war between Saracens and Christians at the age of Charlemagne, that is often compared to the battles against the Turks fought at the beginning of the Sixteenth Century. Ariosto explicitly invited the Este family to take a more active part in these battles, calling for a new Crusade against the Moslems that could reunite together all the Christian countries (*Of.*, XVII, 73-79). The conquest of Alessandretta can be considered as a long desired for victory of the Estensi over the Ottoman forces, or even as a re-conquest of their original territory, if we consider that the Este dukes believed that they were the descendants of Hector of Troy (*Of.*, III, 17, 1-2).

The Estensi did not have any right to take figurative possession of the American territories, and it is for this reason that the queendom of the Amazons could not possibly be located in the New World. The strong alliance between the Este family and the Emperor Charles V, *dominus mundi*, prevented Ariosto from claiming virtual possession of territories formally under Spanish control. Ariosto explicitly celebrated Charles V as a new Charlemagne dominating over the New World (*Of.*, XV, 32-36), and it seems he personally gave a copy of the last edition of the *Furioso* to the Emperor, who greatly appreciated the work. As such, the Este family could figuratively dominate over the territories occupied by the barbaric Turks, but not over the newly discovered lands overseas occupied by the Spaniards.

In any case, the domination over Alessandretta does not have a triumphant ending, probably reflecting Ariosto's scepticism that the Estensi could actually be interested in taking an active role in the new Crusade. Elbanio's final successor Guidon Selvaggio looked forward to greater feats of arms, and, persuaded by Marfisa, planned to destroy the queendom of the *femine omicide* and escape from Alessandretta. The Christians fought bravely against the Amazons, but were only spared due to Astolfo blowing his magical horn. As such, the episode remained unresolved. When Astolfo plays the horn, the Amazons are so scared that they flee, leaving Alessandretta an empty dispossessed land.

In this allegorical quest for domination over the Middle East, there is no space for the New World. However, as we have seen in the introduction and will confirm in the next chapter, Ariosto is keen to evoke the Americas in his poem, without explicitly mentioning it. A reference to the presence of overseas Amazons can be deduced from the escape of the *femine omicide* from Alessandretta, who "senza mai volger la fronte, / fuggir per dieci dì non si ritenne: / uscì in tal punto alcuna fuor dal ponte, / ch'in vita sua mai più non vi rivenne"

(*Of.*, XX, 94, 3-6). The scattering of the Amazons can perhaps be interpreted as an etiological explanation to justify their presence overseas: the end of their queendom in the East, and their diaspora to the New World.

This etiological reading of the episode will not be accepted by Ariosto's fellows, who will continue to locate the Amazons in the Oriental lands. In the *Oronte gigante* by Antonio Lenio (1531), the Amazons helping the Shiites in their battle against the Persians are Turkish. In Clemente Pucciarini's *Brandigi del capitano* (1556), the Amazonian queen Pandea and her companions came from "le più nobil parti d'Oriente / dov'hanno impero l'ardite Amazone" (XIV, 48, 1-2). In Danese Cattaneo's *Amor di Marfisa* (1562), the *femine omicide* described in the *Furioso* travel from the now Christianised Alessandretta to Pavia to ask Marfisa to become their queen (V, 23-74). In the *Fidamante* by Curzio Gonzaga (1582), the king of Egypt calls the princess of the Amazons Tomiride "de l'Asia splendor" and "conforto d'Africa" (XXXI, 16, 3-4).<sup>7</sup> Classical Amazons are also present in mythological poems, such as Giovanbattista Giraldi Cintio's *Hercole* (1557, XIV-XV) and Giovan Battista Marino's *Adone* (1623, XIX, 361), as would be expected from poems based on classical myths. This trend of continuing to locate the Amazons in the East in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries is also present in non-epic works. In the tragicomedy *Adelonda di Frigia* by Federico Della Valle (1595), the island of the Amazons is set close to Pontus in the Black Sea. In the dialogue *Città del sole* by Tommaso Campanella (1602), even the Genoese sea-captain, who was once Columbus's helmsman, talks to the grandmaster of the Knights Hospitaller about the Amazons living "tra la Nubbia e 'l Menopotapa" (1981: 122). The difficulty of Italians in taking possession of the New World was translated in poetry with the confinement of the Amazons to the Old world, or with the use of the American Amazons

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<sup>7</sup> Gonzaga related the myth of the Amazons to the story of Tomyris, the queen of the Massagetae who lived during the Sixth Century.

solely as a device to give historicity and credibility to the poems. After Dati, the first Italian poet to locate Amazons in the Americas was Lorenzo Gambara in his *De Navigatione Christophori Columbi* (1581). Although the Amazons are American in this poem, they do not engage at all with the New World, and are merely descriptive:

Sic est interpres fatus: “Has aspice, ductor  
Hesperidum, terras, et littora; Cannibalum quas  
Uxores habitant tantum nunc; namque ubi terris  
Ver redit, et Taurus caelo se tollit in alto,  
Inuisunt has Cannibali, et convivium silvis  
Laeta agitant, choreas plaudunt, silvisque vagantur  
Obliti solitas ad littora ducere praedas.  
Depulsos a lacte mares per marmora secum  
Adducunt propriam ad littus: redeuntque, nec unquam  
Has sedes, nisi cum terras inuisit aquosum  
Ver iterum, nitidosque dies, tepidamque reducit  
Temperiem, durumque gelu, brumamque relitti.  
Illae habitant certas sublimi in monte cavernas,  
Queis sese, quoties aliquis petit advena littus,  
Abdunt, et mox hostem armis solitisque sagittis  
Depellunt, et multa ineunt certamina semper  
Victrices, semper captos in tecta trahentes.  
Hanc Madaninam vocat illius incola terrae.  
Hoc vetuit spirans Boreas me accedere littus.  
(*De Navigatione*, II, 133-151)

[The interpreter said: “Look, captain of the Hesperides, at these lands and shores now inhabited by the spouses of the cannibals. When spring returns to these lands and the constellation of Taurus raises in the sky, they are visited by the cannibals, and merrily banquet in the woods, dance clapping their hands, and roam in the woods forgetting to take their usual booty to the shore. They send the men back to their land overseas, and the men go, only returning when the rainy spring visits again these lands, brings clear sky and good weather, and melts the heavy ice of the winter. They live in some caves at the top of the mountain, here they hide themselves every time that some foreigners enter their land, and they fight the adversary with their usual weapons and arrows; being always victorious and taking their prisoners to their abodes. The native people of this land call it Madanina”. The North wind Boreas did not allow me to go ashore].<sup>8</sup>

The text is the versification of the description of the Amazons as it appears in Peter Martyr’s *Novo orbe*, that Gambara indicated as his main primary source in the *nota al lettore*

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<sup>8</sup> Translation is mine. Another reference to the Amazons is also in Gambara, *De Navigatione*, II, 882-887.

included at the end of the work (1581: H5r). According to Peter Martyr (1574: 16-17), the Amazons were the spouses of the cannibals, living in “grandes cuniculos habere aiunt, ad quos, si alio quàm constituto tempore quisquam ad eas proficiscatur, confugiant. Unde, si aut per vim, aut per insidias tentare aditum sequentes audeant, sagittis sese tueantur, quas certissimas iacere creduntur” [vast caverns where they conceal themselves if any man tries to visit them at another than the established time. Should any one attempt to force his way into these caverns by violence or by trickery, they defend themselves with arrows, which they shoot with great precision] (English translation in Anghiera, 1912: 73). The Christians were prevented from disembarking on the island because of the “boream” [the north wind], and were forced to continue the navigation without the possibility of meeting the Amazons. The difficulty of the poet in distancing his poem from the reference text is particularly evident in his use of the same words used by Peter Martyr, a detail that is significant for understanding the didactic purposes of this poem. As in Dati’s case, the passage has greater historical than literary value: Columbus is not able to take possession of Matanino, and the American Amazons are just factual embellishments.

Little engagement with the myth of the New World Amazons appears also in Giulio Cesare Stella’s *Columbeidos* (1585), written a few years after Gambara’s poem. Although the *Columbeidos* is considered an emulation of the *Aeneid*, the space dedicated to the Amazons only covers a few verses, and the warrior women play a cameo role remaining anonymous and empty:

Matitinaeque sinum celeri legit incita cursu,  
 Culta feris loca virginibus, procul inde virorum  
 Interclusi aditus generi, ni tempore certo  
 Alma Venus cum vere nouo sarcire caducae  
 Damna, monet gentis, facibusque inflammat amoris,  
 Cannibalos in tecta vocent, communia Regni  
 Ipsae sceptrata tenent, pacemque, ac bella ministrant,  
 Et pulcra populos in libertate tuentur;

Non aliter postquam una mares nox abstulit omnes  
Lemnia crudelis tenuerunt littora matres.  
(*Columbeidos*, I, 625-634)

[With swift course it reaches the bay of Matitina, where dwell she-savages – a virgin tribe who keep men's advances far at bay, except at that certain season when, in early Spring, bountiful Venus urges them to renew the withering fortunes of their race, and sets them aflame with the torches of desire. Then they call the Cannibal men into their huts. These women wield the power of their state in common, making peace and war and preserving other tribes in blessed freedom. In just this way the hardhearted matrons of Lemnos ruled their own shores, after a single night had carried off all their men]. (English translation in Llewellyn, 2006: 459).

Stella does not explain how the Admiral obtained the information about Matitino and its inhabitants, as well as the other islands he gazed upon. As such, Columbus can be considered a mere spectator who does not really engage with the new reality. The reference to the Lemnian women believed to live on the Aegean islands in the third millennium BC is an explicit reference to the mythological Amazons of the Greek tradition, once again indicating the literary difficulties in developing the new myth. The American Amazons are described from an ethnographical point of view, without any poetical insight. They do not have proper names, unlike the Amazons in Boccaccio, Pulci and Stagi's poems. They are not involved in *romanzeschi* episodes that would have fitted well into the epic genre. They do not have an identity, as they are considered just for their ability to create anthropological curiosity in the reader.

### **American Amazons as tools of Italian propaganda**

The celebration of the American Amazons as epic characters only arrives in 1596 with Giovanni Giorgini's *Mondo nuovo*. In this work the New World warrior-women acquire a certain poetic depth, are provided with the power of speech, and involved in romantic matters.



Although they continue to be anonymous as no proper names were given, they are elevated to the factual status of heroines. The reason for this evolution in the treatment of the Amazons in epic poems can be connected, as we will see, with the late Sixteenth-Century proliferation of allegorical representations of America. A short overview of this trend will help us to track the transformation of the New World Amazons from body doubles to protagonists.

By the 1570s, America is represented in iconography as a provocative naked woman with full breasts, indicating the fertility and abundance of the New World (Le Corbeiller, 1961; Honour, 1975; Antei, 1988; Arizzoli, 2012). Jonathan Hart (2003: 99), Remedios Mataix (2010c: 121), and Alejandra Flores de la Flor (2013a: 45-46) noted that in these representations America often acquired the typical characteristic of the New World Amazons. Like the savage warrior women, America wears a feathered headdress, is armed with bow and arrows, and accompanied by exotic animals such as parrots, armadillos and crocodiles (fig. 15-21). To these details, we can add that she is often depicted either carrying or stepping upon a severed head. Scholars have usually considered it a symbol of her cannibalism, as cannibals are a constant presence in the construction of the American imaginary (Shirley, 2009: 46-47; Palencia-Roth, 1996: 40). However, the dismembered body parts that usually represent cannibalism are arms and legs. This can be seen for example in Theodor de Bry's *Americae tertia pars* (1592), where the Tupinamba people are depicted chewing legs and forearms (fig. 22). What, then, does the severed head stand for? Could it be interpreted as a token of the misandry of the Amazons, and by extension the danger to men of the America that they represent (fig. 23)? The legend accompanying one of the most famous representations of the Amazonian America, Philips Galle's *Prosopographia* (c. 1590), talks about the way in which America 'devours' men: "Estrix dira hominum [...] America" [America, an ogresse who devours men] (English translation in Palencia-Roth, 1996: 40; fig. 24). This suggests, by

analogy, the ferocious appetite for men that the conquerors projected onto the Amazons. In this respect the image of the Amazon and the severed head is like a reversal of the traditional image of Perseus carrying Medusa's severed head (fig. 25), that scholars have usually considered a sign of misogyny and oppressed womanhood (Garber & Vickers, 2003). As attested by Pausanias (*Description of Greece*, II, 21, 5) and Diodorus Siculus (*Bibliotheca historica*, I, 287), Medusa was in fact queen of the Amazons, a notion that was still accepted in the age of discoveries by André Thevet and Walter Raleigh (Schwarz, 2000: 29). Therefore, in iconography as in poetry, America and the Amazons are associated, and the Amazons are once again used as an allegory for their land.

The use that artists made of these figures can help us to trace the introduction of New World Amazons in the epic poems. As scholars such as Lia Markey (2008, 2012) have shown, Italian artists and artists working for Italian patrons often used these personifications of America/Amazons as a tool to highlight Italy's role in the invention of the New World. For example, Vespucci awakens America in Stradanus's *Allegory of America* (1575-1580, fig. 26) in an act that numerous scholars have defined in sexual terms, due to the welcoming attitude of the woman (Mataix, 2010a: 406; McClintock, 1995: 26-27; Watson, 2015: 82). Stradanus, influential artist at the Medici court, made use of this image of Vespucci being sexually involved with America to underline the role of Florence in the invention of the New World (Markey, 2008, 2012; Baroni, 2012). In the same way, Columbus is used as an emblem to indicate how America was subjugated by Italy. One of the most emblematic representations of this trend is the fresco on the ceiling of the Sala Maggiore in Palazzo Lodron (1577, Trento, Italy, fig. 27). Columbus is depicted sitting on a cart dragged by sea monsters, whilst putting his foot on the shoulder of naked America. In doing so, he shows both his physical and territorial domination of her (Boschi, 1994). By representing the Italian navigators in the act

of ‘possessing’ America, artists celebrated Italy’s engagement with the Americas. Possibly influenced by this trend, at the end of the Sixteenth Century Italian epic poets also employed the myth of the Amazons as a tool to indicate Italian legitimacy and authority over the newly found lands. American Amazons were no longer ignored because of Italian embarrassment at being left out of the New World expansion, but rather used to claim the role of Italy in the invention of the New World.

In the Columbian poems produced in the last years of the Sixteenth Century and the beginning of the Seventeenth Century, America is represented by the queen of the Amazons, usually described as a dignified warrior dominating a land rich in gold and wealth. She is particularly recognisable for her beautiful body and full breasts, that are a permanent feature in her description (Giorgini, *Mondo nuovo*, VII, 69; Stigliani, *Mondo nuovo*, XVI, 37-41; Di Somma, *America*, I, 30-31). Giorgio Antei used the expression “iconographical synecdoche” to indicate how America represented the entire new discovered continent with her body (1989: 10). Following this definition, the queen of the Amazons in epic poems can then be interpreted as the “literary synecdoche” of an equally significant process of describing the New World. I will focus now on three poems written between 1596 and 1624 (Giovanni Giorgini’s *Mondo nuovo*, Tommaso Stigliani’s *Mondo nuovo* and Agazio Di Somma’s *America*) to show how the queen of the American Amazons, synecdoche for America, was used as an Italian propaganda device. The nationalism of the poets is evident from the relationship established in the poems by the Italian explorers with the queen.

In Giorgini’s *Mondo nuovo* (1596), the hero Diego de Salazar, historically a Spanish soldier who accompanied Columbus in his expedition to modern day Santo Domingo, marries the queen of the American Amazons. This marriage is above all allegorical. By allowing a Spaniard to marry the queen of the Amazons who represented America, Giorgini described

the political situation of his time, with the Spanish Empire dominating the overseas territories. Such a reading of the episode would confirm the pro-Spanish attitude of Giorgini, that has been attested to by numerous scholars working on the *Mondo nuovo* such as Marisa Perrotta (1979), Albert N. Mancini (1992) and Sandro Baldoncini (1993). However, a close textual analysis of the episode allows us to reconsider the political position of the poet regarding colonialism. The role of Italy is in fact restored in the poem through the figure of Columbus, who “nacque in Europa dentro a una guerriera / provintia, che si chiama Italia” (*MN*, VI, 19, 6-7). Columbus is the mastermind of the Spanish domination in the New World, as he is the character that helps Salazar (Spain) to marry the queen of the Amazons (America): “Di tal’amor hebbe notitia chiara / il buon Colombo, e rise, e darli aiuto / tutte le forse sue insiem prepara” (*MN*, XVII, 72, 1-3). Giorgini suggests that the wedding, tantamount to the submission of America to the Spanish Empire, would have never taken place without the preponderant role played by the Italian Columbus. According to Mancini, the *Mondo nuovo* is a poem that “si propone come un lavoro direttamente e problematicamente d'accordo con il suo mondo e il suo tempo” (1992: 175). The protagonist is King Ferdinand, and the work is dedicated to the “Invittissimo Principe di Spagna, e sue Serenissime Sorelle” (1596: 1), the future King Philip III, and the infants Isabella Clara Eugenia and Catalina Micaela. However, the construction of plot in the episode of the Amazons reveals how the poet highlighted not only the role of Spain, but also of Italy in the conquest of America, restoring the value of his own country. This can be recognised in the poet’s choice to base the queen of the Amazons in the *Mondo nuovo* on the figure of Catalina Micaela. As I have shown in my article *Ippolita rinascimentale* (2014: 19-21), the queen of the Amazons was in fact a portrayal of the Spanish Infanta, who was also considered a formal Italian duchess after her wedding with Carlo Emanuele I of Savoy celebrated in 1585. The double nationality of the duchess could have

been used by Giorgini as a device to both celebrate the country of his patrons (Spain), whilst also singing the praises of his homeland (Italy) at the same time.

A similar propagandistic role is attributed to the queen of the Amazons in Stigliani's *Mondo nuovo* (1617, 1628). Here the Christian knight marrying the queen of the Amazons Polinesta is not longer a Spaniard, but rather the Italian Silvarte (*MN*, XII, 62). As in Giorgini's poem, the wedding is a symbol of the European appropriation of the Amazonian queendom, as clearly stated by Polinesta to her lover: "Ti farò delle mie nozze degno, / e signor diventar di questo regno" (*MN.*, XVI, 49, 7-8). However, the wedding between Silvarte and Polinesta, or to say between Italy and America, does not have a happy ending. The two protagonists are barbarically killed, and the dream of Italian domination over the New World dies with them. The control of the Amazon queendom is in fact taken by the Portuguese Martidora, who claims possession for Portugal and Spain of a region that should have instead been Italian by legacy (*MN*, XVIII, 159-160). The wedding gave Silvarte/Italy the political right to acquire America, but "di Fortuna gli orribili accidenti" (*MN.*, XVIII, 46, 2) denied this. For Nathalie Hester the *Mondo nuovo* "remains a decidedly Italian endeavor in which the tensions between foregrounding Italy's modern literary primacy in the form of the epic, on the one hand, and Spanish imperialism on the other, remain unresolved" (2012: 208). However, the wedding between Silvarte and Polinestra is a convincing attempt by the poet to create national sensibility about the New World theme. The episode was already included in the first edition of the poem, and indicates the interest of Stigliani in getting the attention of his Italian patrons. As I have shown in my MA thesis (2009), during the composition of his poem Stigliani was unsure to whom to dedicate the poem to, undecided between Felice Orsina Perretti Damasceni, Ranuccio I Farnese, Carlo Emanuele I of Savoy and Cosimo II de' Medici. As such, he created a poem that could be easily adapted to each of them, celebrating

Italy as a “gloriosa terra, / e madre d’eccellenza in tutte l’arti” (*MN*, I, 55, 3-4). The most valiant knights in the *Mondo nuovo* are Italians such as Columbus, Silvarte, Algabro, Diego and Baccio; and the American beauty is compared to the grace of different Italian cities such as Stigliani’s hometown Matera (VII, 6), Milan (XXXI, 93), Venice (XI, 141) and Naples (XIV, 94). In the poem, Stigliani claimed that Columbus’s son Diego commanded the Genoese troops, whilst Columbus’s brother Bartholomew commanded those from Tuscany (I, 55, 6-7). This nationalism of Stigliani even drew criticism from Angelico Aproso in the *Vaglio critico* (1637): “Dove havete voi letto che in Compagnia del Colombo vi andassero soldati, od huomini Italiani? Di sicuro negli Annali di Matera” (Liberatori, 1990: 58; García Aguilar, 2007b). By introducing Italian heroes at the expense of authenticity in his poem, Stigliani showed his interest in restoring Italy’s position in the process of conquest. The nuptials between Silvarte and Polinesta as such can be considered an attempt to legitimise the Italian dream of possessing the New World.

The Amazonian episode is developed in a different manner in Agazio di Somma’s *I due primi canti dell’America* (1624), as the wedding between Oronta, queen of the American Amazons, and Ormeno, the knight representing Italy, is prevented here by the family relationship that links the two protagonists. In the story, Ormeno is abandoned by his mother when he was still an infant, and raised by a fisherman. Once grown up, the young man decided to help Columbus in the battle against the combined forces controlled by king Attabila. “Spinto da pensier nobile”, Ormeno decided to join the “italiche squadre” (*America*, I, 58, 6-7), appearing Italian due to his dress and armour (*America*, I, 56). In the battle, he found himself fighting against his own mother, neither aware of their degree of kinship.

Oronta was compared to a tiger, representing the exoticism of the newly discovered lands.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, Ormeno was compared to a bull, possibly symbolising Europe or Calabria. The myth of the Phoenician Europa kidnapped by Zeus in the shape of a bull could have in fact connected the figure of Ormeno to Europe.<sup>10</sup> However, the bull was also the symbol of Calabria in the early modern period, with a reference to the pre-Greek Italic populations living there. As Di Somma hailed from the Calabrian Simeri Cricchi, the bull could also be considered homage from the poet to his own region. The fight between Italy-Ormeno and America-Oronta marks the Italian role in the colonisation. The importance of Italy in the conquest of America is made even more evident by the arrival of Vespucci and his men on the battlefield. The Italian troops led by Vespucci play a crucial role in the battle between the Europeans and the Native Americans, guiding the Europeans to victory (*America*, I, 66). However, as the *America* was limited to the first two cantos, we do not know how the poet intended to develop the episode. Italy is eventually prevented from marrying and possessing America because of the consanguinity of Oronta and Ormeno. This could be considered an explanation for Italy's renouncement of the newly discovered lands. This same trope of Italy prevented from possessing America for 'family' reasons will be adopted and developed more explicitly by Ascanio Grandi in his *Tancredi* (1632).

In the *Tancredi*, the main character of the Amazonian episode is no longer the queen of the Amazons, but a formal personification of America. The Italian hero Tancredi, prince of Taranto, rescues her from the clutches of a sea monster, and frees her from the sorcery of the evil Sur through baptism. The capital city of America's kingdom was renamed Tancredonia

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<sup>9</sup> Two famous literary mothers who killed their own children were compared to tigers: Medea in the omonymous tragedy by Euripides ("no woman, but a tiger", 1221), and Procne in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* ("She dragged Itys after hir, as when it happens in Inde / A Tyger gets a little Calfe that suckes upon a Hynde / and drags him through the shadie woods", 805-806).

<sup>10</sup> In the early modern iconography depicting the four continents of the world, Europe is often represented alongside the image of Europa and the bull. See Shirley (2008).

after him, and a statue was erected in honour of the Italian saviour. However, Italy is once again prevented from marrying/conquering America. Tancredi explains to Norte that “d’obbligo, e di pietà molt’opra ancora / già ne l’artico mondo a me rimane” (*Tancredi*, XI, 96, 1-2), suggesting that Italy had to renounce possession of America in order to complete its diplomatic mission in the Old World. The poet refers to the siege of Antioch that occupies a significant part of the poem, and to the conquest of Phasis in Colchis that Tancredi achieves in the last canto (*Tancredi*, XX, 110-213). But, it is also possible that Grandi is referring to the numerous battles against the Turks that Italian states had to deal with during the years of the conquest of the Americas. In this way, he is presenting his readers with the reason that excluded the Italian peninsula, and in particular his homeland Salento, from having a more active role in the process. The protagonist adds that having been America’s godfather, it is not possible for him to marry/possess the new continent, as America cannot be his “figlia, e consorte” at the same time (*Tancredi*, XI, 97, 8). For Grandi, America is daughter of Italy, created and invented by Columbus and the other Italian explorers. The idea of an Italian baptising America can be seen as a specific reference to Vespucci, whose name Amerigo was given to the new continent by the German cartographer Martin Waldseemüller.<sup>11</sup> Unable to be possessed by Tancredi/Italy, America was forced to marry one of Tancredi’s men representing the other European countries. The goddess Fortuna selected Ibero (allegory of Spain) from amongst the candidates, in this way the poet gives no credit at all to Spain for the conquest of

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<sup>11</sup> In Villifranchi’s *Colombo*, Vespucci is the father of America:

Gravido il sen di nobil fiamma viva  
partorisce nel mar figlia beata  
che ad altre genti i suoi tesori apriva,  
mole immensa del mondo al mondo nata.  
Tal corona la fama al crine ordiva  
che da lui fosse America nomata,  
ben degno premio a le sofferte some  
che viva ne la figlia eterno il nome (II, 64).



the New World with the choice having been purely casual. Italian renouncement of the New World is confirmed by the poet's choice to locate queen Tigrina's Amazons in Mesopotamia (*Tancredi*, VIII, 67).

From the 1620s onwards, the Amazons are once again located in Asia and Africa, a possible indication that Italy felt it had no claim on the Americas. In Giulio Malmignati's *Enrico, ovvero Francia conquistata* (1623), they are located in Ethiopia (*Enrico*, VI); whilst in Angelita Scaramuccia's *Belisario* (1635) the Amazonian city of Hespera governed by queen Florista is on an island located in a vast swamp between Ethiopia and the Atlas Mountains (*Belisario*, X, 19, 1). Even in an 'American' poem such as Girolamo Bartolomei's *America* (1650), they are mainly located, as we will see, in Damut in Ethiopia (*America*, XII, 54, 1-4). This trend of locating the Amazons in Africa was possibly influenced by the role of France in the invention of the Americas, as some of these poems featuring African Amazons in the Seventeenth Century were addressed to French patrons. The *Enrico* and the *Belisario* were in fact dedicated to Louis XIII of France, and the *America* to Louis XIV. As the American Amazons possibly represented French Guyana, it was perhaps better for the Italian poets to avoid claiming territorial possession of lands formally occupied by their French patrons. Instead, the African Amazons living in territories occupied by Portugal were probably more appropriate for their nationalistic purposes as poets did not have implications of patronage with this nation. A close textual analysis of Bartolomei's *America* can help us to track these nationalistic reasons that possibly caused the Italians to stop introducing American Amazons in their poems.

In the *America*, the New World Amazons living in French Guyana are depicted on a tapestry hanging in the palace of King Tumbeo, sovereign of a land located between Peru and Brazil. Through the device of ekphrasis, the royal *cameriero* showed Vespucci and his crew

these “memorande Femmine Ammazzone” (*America*, XXXIII, 100, 4), considered part of the army that protected El Dorado. However, the American Amazons are only mentioned *en passant* with a didactic purpose, whilst the Amazons that have a main role in the poem are the warrior women living in Africa: “In grembo all’Etiopia Regione / siede Damut sotto la zona estiva; / che si rese di Femmine Amazone / celebrata colà sede nativa” (*America*, XII, 54, 1-4). The poem is particularly focused on the princess of the African Amazons Lampedona<sup>12</sup>, commander of the territories dominated by King Monomotapa. Lampedona, in love with Amerigo Vespucci’s nephew Vespuccio, gives him an ivory fang obtained during an elephant hunt. This object, as explained by Bartolomei himself in the allegorical scheme following each canto of his poem, is a symbol of possession of the territories that Lampedona donated to her lover (1650: 238). The elephant was in fact the symbol of Africa in the early modern period, as attested to by its presence in numerous iconographical representations of the Dark Continent (Le Corbeiller, 1961: 218). As such, Bartolomei seems to claim the Florentine/Italian legacy over East Africa, helped by the association between the poetic Vespucci and Vasco da Gama, who historically took possession of East Africa for Portugal. In the poem, Vespucci followed in fact the same route taken by Da Gama (*America*, XII, 41-49), evoking the Portuguese explorer.

The Florentine Bartolomei, who, as shown by Hester, was keen to promote his hometown through the figures of Amerigo Vespucci and Vespuccio<sup>13</sup>, presumably preferred to claim possession of East Africa for Florence, rather than of America as the title of his poem suggested. The reason for this choice can be possibly explained by taking into consideration

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<sup>12</sup> Lampedona was one of the first queens of the Amazons together with Martesia that the literary tradition transformed into Marfisa. See Berdini (1642, ch. XLIV: 132).

<sup>13</sup> Hester, N., “*Il Mio Toscano Eroe*”: Vespucci as Epic Hero in Girolamo Bartolomei Smeducci’s *America* (1650), paper presented at the 2011 RSA Annual Meeting, Washington, DC.

the political game of expansionism played by the different European countries. Bartolomei's patron and dedicatee of the poem, Louis XIV of France, was in fact expanding French political control over the territory still known today as French Guyana, where the American Amazons were based in Bartolomei's poem. This territory had been originally claimed by Florence at the beginning of the Seventeenth Century, when Ferdinando I de' Medici sent the English explorer Robert Thornton to establish a Tuscan settlement there (Guarnieri, 1928). The project was abandoned with the death of Ferdinando, as his successor Cosimo II did not have any interest in settling a colony overseas. That part of Guyana was therefore occupied by France from the 1630s, in the course of various expeditions organised by Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu (Walker, 2012). As such, it was presumptively dangerous for Bartolomei to claim the Florentine custody over a territory that legally belonged to his French patron. The poet prudently only briefly mentioned the American Amazons 'possessed' by Frenchmen in Guyana, and instead dedicated more space to the African-Portuguese Amazons that could have been conquered by the Florentines, in this way possibly avoiding any political implications with his patron. From the words Lampedona tells Amerigo when she realises with relief that he is not a Spaniard or a Portuguese, we can understand that the *America* was a poem definitely not written to please a Spanish or Portuguese public: "Tu non discendi, no, da' Lidi Ispani: / huom non sè tu, che l'altrui frutti invole, / noie recando a' prossimi, e lontani" (*America*, XII, 93, 2-4).<sup>14</sup> As highlighted by Lorenzo Geri (2014: 51), Vespucci is also presented in the poem as the founder of Salvador da Bahia, the first Portuguese colonial city of Brazil, and in the next chapter we will see how he can be easily substituted for the Portuguese Magellan as the discover of the Patagonian giants. This indicates that the Portuguese territories were free to be fictionally possessed by the Florentines, possibly

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<sup>14</sup> An interesting choice considering that when the poem was published Anne of Austria, eldest daughter of King Philipp III of Spain, was the formal regent of France.

because of the colonial tensions between France and Portugal. The acquisition of French colonies instead was to be carefully avoided for patronage reasons.

The presence of the American Amazons in epic poetry was ephemeral: the New World remained a mirage for Italy, and the claim over the newly discovered lands appeared as a nostalgic memento of Italian colonial power. The absence of American Amazons in poems written before and after their ‘golden age 1596-1624’ indicates the political tension experienced by Italians confronted with the reality of the New World. Italian heroes possessed the attractive and terrific Amazons representing Asia and Africa, but not those representing America, as they did not have the right to do so. The fleeting presence of the New World Amazons in poetry represented an attempt by the Italians to restore the colonial role of Italy, giving etiological explanations for the Spanish domination over the Americas. The result is a series of poems where the impossibility of the Italian heroes of conquering the American queen of the Amazons is a mirror of the frustration experienced by Italy in the New World colonial enterprise.

### **The American *querelle des femmes***

The political distance between Italy and America declared by Italian epic poets is evident in the use of the Amazons as tools to describe more the Italian reality rather than the New World. Referring to the English literary world, Kathryn Schwarz showed that “Amazons in early modern texts appear not only in the new world but in the social categories that structure the world at home” (2000: 60). The scholar noticed that in the works of Shakespeare, Spenser, Sidney, Raleigh, and Jonson the Amazons were often relegated to traditional European domestic roles, allowing the poets to refer to their own reality: “They [the

Amazons] prove less about the new world than they do about desire and interpenetration of texts” (2000: 58). The same can be said about the Amazons described by early modern Italian poets, as the myth of the Amazons gave them the possibility to take part in two of the most popular debates of their time: the *querelle des femmes*, and the discussion about the humanity of Amerindians. The position occupied by the poets in these debates influenced their description of the American Amazons giving insights into the early modern Italian society. However, as we will see, we can also find elements confirming the Italian nationalistic aims over the Americas in the Italianised American Amazons.

Numerous treatises and dialogues were produced on the ‘woman question’ between the end of the Sixteenth and the beginning of the Seventeenth Century. These works provided different insights into the virtues and weaknesses of women, including their inferiority, equality and superiority to men. They were often considered formal treatises explaining in detail how women should act, and what they were entitled to. Female poets such as Laura Terracina, Moderata Fonte, Lucrezia Marinelli and Arcangela Tarabotti had a prominent role in the feminist debate, and they were supported by pro-women male authors such as Domenico Bruni, Lodovico Domenichi and Luigi Dardano.<sup>15</sup> In addition Tasso, who was one of the main models for Giorgini and Stigliani (Menghini, 1890: 4-6; Belloni, 1912: IX) took part in the *querelle* with his treatise *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca* (1582). Here Tasso supported women, although, as noted by Marinelli, for Tasso “il nome di Donna si convenga solamente alle Reine, alle Prencipesse, et a quelle, ch’egli chiama Donne heroiche” (1601: 128).

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<sup>15</sup> On the *querelle des femmes* see in particular Kelly (1984); Rivera Garretas (1994); King & Rabil (1996); Bock (2000).

The classical Amazons were already a powerful motif to use in the *querelle des femmes* because, as suggested by Sylvie Steinberg, “la figure de l’Amazone s’impose dans le discours féministe, dans la littérature de défense des femmes des XVIe et XVIIe siècles, comme la preuve emblématique de la légitimité du pouvoir exercé par des femmes” (1999, 261-262) [the figure of the Amazon prevails in the feminist discourse, in the Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century literature dealing with the defense of women, as the emblematic proof of the legitimacy of power exercised by women]. Numerous poets, such as Moderata Fonte and Lucrezia Marinelli, introduced Amazons in their treatises to highlight the achievements of women, and to exalt their qualities (Viennot, 2008). However, the American Amazons constituted an even greater subject for debate as they connected the debate about women with the perception of indigenous people in the early modern period. As such, these Amazons made it possible to reflect not only on the role of women in European society, but also on the nature of Native Americans. The formal debate about the human nature of these populations took place in Valladolid in 1550, when Charles V convened a board of theologians and philosophers to discuss if they could be included in the human race. The leading speakers in this debate were Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, who initiated two well defined schools of thought. The first school, headed by Las Casas, supported the thesis that indigenous people were human beings, and should be considered as such. In his *Brevísima relación de la distrucción de las Indias* (1542), the Spanish historian denounced the mercilessness of the conquistadores, and firmly supported the rights of the Native Americans. On the other side, Sepúlveda considered the savages as sinners against nature and God, who as such should have been enslaved according to the Aristotelian principle of ‘natural slavery’. In his dialogue *Democrates secundus, seu de iustis belli causis apud Indios*

(1543), Sepúlveda considered the Native Americans to be libidinous and perverted *homunculi* who should be eliminated.

Being both women and indigenous, the New World Amazons can be considered the intersection of these two arguments. As noticed by Mataix, they embodied “las oposiciones básicas de la retórica colonial [...]: nosotros/los otros, civilizados/selvajes, cultura/naturaleza y masculino/femenino” (2010b: 189) [the basic oppositions of the colonial discourse: we/the others, civilise/savage, culture/nature and male/female]. They can be considered as the intersection of the two debates, and also of the cultural mediation between the Old and New worlds. Their ambiguity allowed poets to reflect on the nature of women, wondering if female agency was natural, or created by social and cultural conventions. Their iconic body, symbol of the New World, was used by poets to consider if Native Americans could be seen as equals to Europeans.

Despite the similarity of the episodes in Giorgini and Stigliani’s poems, where the Christian hero ends up marrying the queen of the American Amazons, the treatment of the martial women in the two poems is very different. As noticed by Androniki Dialeti, “the different way each author treats the bipolar schema of women’s defenders and enemies within the pro-woman literature often reflects his social background and cultural identity” (2003: 7). The difference in the treatment of the Amazons in the two poems can be attributed to the different positions taken by the poets in the most popular debates of their time.

The Giorginian Amazons are indebted to the misogynous current of thought that was best exemplified in these years in Giuseppe Passi’s *I donneschi difetti* (1599), published three years after the *Mondo nuovo*. Giorgini seems to have been particularly inspired in his depiction of the Amazons by the dialogue *Della dignità delle donne* by Sperone Speroni (1542), that was printed in numerous editions during the *Cinquecento*. As we will see, the

words of Speroni appear in fact in Giorgini's text. In the dialogue, the Venetian humanist Daniele Barbaro reports the debate about the nature of women to his friend Michele Barozzi that took place in the abode of Beatrice degli Obizzi. The noblewoman herself pronounced what can be considered an 'apology for obedience', claiming that women should consider themselves honoured to be commanded by their husbands: "altrettanto la virtuosa mogliera del suo servire al marito dee gloriarsi, quanto il marito del comandarla" (1552: 38r). As women are imperfect and weak, they are obliged by their own nature to serve men; and they cannot be considered 'women' unless they are subdued.

In the *Mondo nuovo*, it is possible to recognise distinctly this condition of *imbecillitas sexus* attributed to women. The weakness of the New World Amazons is the first trait highlighted by Giorgini, and it can immediately communicate the misogynous position of the poet to the reader. In canto XVII, Columbus arrives with his men to Matitino Island, but the king of Borichen (nowadays Puerto Rico) discourages them from going ashore. The king reveals that the Amazons would hide themselves in labyrinthic caves, and it would have taken months to find them. This trope of the American Amazons living in caves was present in numerous historical accounts. In Benedetto Bordone's *Isolario* (1528), for example, it is reported that "Le loro habitationi sono cave sotterranee, nelle quali, se alcuno huomo, fuor del tempo che è per loro terminato, con esse congiungersi volesse, fuggono, & dentro di quelle caverne, con le lor saette si defendono" (1547: I, 14v). Giorgini probably took the inspiration for the location of his Amazons from these accounts, but he clearly manipulated the material he had in hand in order to make the Amazons appear as cowards, who preferred to hide themselves rather than openly fight: "chiaro / fece il costume, ch'han le donne, ratto / d'ascondersi entro a grotte, ov'il Sol raro, / o mai si vidde, se ver lor ritratto / popul si vede"



(*MN.*, XVII, 29, 2-6). Cowardice was also a trait attributed to indigenous people. In the *Democrates secundus*, Sepúlveda claimed, for example, that Native Americans were so:

ignavi et timidi, ut vix nostrorum hostilem aspectum ferre possint et saepe ipsorum multa millia perpaucis Hispanis ne centum quidem numerum explentibus cesserint muliebri fuga dissipati (X, 1, 20).

[cowardly and timid that they can scarcely resist the presence of our soldiers, and many times thousands and thousands of them have scattered, fleeing like women in the face of very few Spaniards, even less than a hundred] (English translation in Cowans, 2003: 61).

The craven Giorginian Amazons can be considered weak due to being both women, and Native Americans. The weakness is not only physical, but also cultural; this is emphasised by the Amazons' attraction for items typically used by Renaissance women that the king of Borichen took to Matitino. The Amazons immediately discarded their weapons in order to wear these trinkets, recanting their own identity:

Collanne di cristallo, e aghi, e spille,  
Cuffie da donna, e lavorate liste,  
Camischie, e vesti, e con lor altre mille  
Cose mostrò, mai più da lor non viste,  
Come sonagli, e picciolette squille,  
Et altre cose di vaghezza ammiste.  
Lasciano l'armi, e d'adornarsi attente  
Di quelle cose son tutte contente.  
(*MN.*, XVII, 37)

As indicated by Giorgini himself (*MN.*, VII, 38), the scene is the opposite of the classical episode of Achilles on Skyros, when the Greek hero was dressed in feminine clothes and given to king Lycomedes to take care of (Hyginus, *Fabulae*, XCVI; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XIII, 162-170). The astute Ulysses, pretending to be a merchant, introduced fabrics and items of feminine taste in the royal palace, as well as weapons that revealed the masculine nature of Achilles. In the same way, the Amazons dressed in masculine attires and fully armed in Giorgini's poem reveal their 'true' feminine nature, and the poet concludes

that: “Sforzar natura puote industria, e arte, / ma tosto al suo primier voto ritorna” (*MN*, XVII, 38, 1-2). The Amazons are blissfully ready to renounce not only their weapons, but also their culture and life style, ecstatic because “sospinte dal desio di cose nuove” (*MN*, XVII, 41, 1). A particular role in the construction of the Giorginian Amazons’ persona is represented by the severed head of the “fier Caribi” (*Mn*, XVII, 47, 5) that the king of Borichen showed to the warrior women. The head is an instrument to convince the Amazons to surrender to the Christian troops, suggesting that their allies were already defeated and that no one would have supported them in an eventual battle against Columbus and his fellows. This head can be considered a counterpart of the severed head American Amazons were usually represented with in the iconography. It is frequently that of a European in engravings and woodcuts, as noticed by scholars such as Margaret E. Owens (2005: 152) and Sara Kowalski (2011: 2). The beard is a distinguishing element of identification, as Native Americans were considered hairless, whilst the Europeans were often nicknamed ‘popolo barbuto’.<sup>16</sup> The severed head of the Europeans represented the Old World fear of the new unknown reality overseas. Conversely, the head of a Native American at the feet of the Amazons representing America suggests the victory of the Christian faith over the savagery of the New World, implying the supposed inferiority of Native Americans and their need to be enslaved. The Amazons are not only ready to subjugate themselves to the conquistadores, but also to the men in a sexual and social way:

Vol’il supremo Iddio, ch’a l’huom soggetta  
 La donna sia, ad un sol marito intenta,  
 Non che per serva, o schiava si sommetta,  
 Ma con gran libertà a quello acconsenta,  
 Che rega anch’ella dal marito retta,  
 Et adiutorro a quel tosto si senta.

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<sup>16</sup> In the letter to Soderini, Vespucci explains that Native Americans “non si lasciano crescere pelo nessuno nelle ciglia, né ne’ coperchi delli occhi, né in altra parte nessuna, salvo che quelli del capo, ché tengono e peli per brutta cosa”.

Il primo egli sarà, quella seconda,  
E sol attendei dè a sua prol feconda.  
(*MN*, XVII, 55)

For Giorgini, women should submit to men with nonchalance to make it appear that it is their own free choice to submit. This precept was supported by Speroni in *Della dignità delle donne*: “Serva adunque la donna, poi che a servir è creata; ma non l’aggravi tal servitù: concio sia cosa ch’ella non serva si come priva di libertà, et a guisa di schiava, ma come cosa, cui l’esser libera tanto o quanto non si convenga” (1552: 40r). Therefore, by deciding to submit herself and her companions to European men, the queen of the Amazons is transformed into a typical European noblewoman. She is also glad to consign her queendom to the Europeans, in order to elevate herself to a ‘better’ condition that is in reality slavery: “A più sublime grado è tal piegarsi, / Et in celesti dive il transformarsi” (*MN*, XVII, 63). This new condition is immediately evident in the wedding between the queen of the Amazons and Diego de Salazar. The choice to marry Salazar should have appeared as a decision of the queen, so that she “n’havrà cagion di lamentarsi ogn’hora / d’altrui giuditio” (*MN.*, XVII, 73, 5-6). However, as we have already seen, it was Columbus that orchestrated the marriage, giving the queen the pretence that it was her own free choice.

Completely opposite is the description of the Amazons in Tommaso Stigliani’s *Mondo nuovo*. As I have shown in my MPhil thesis (2011: 23), Stigliani supported the moderate current represented by Girolamo Benzoni in the context of the Valladolid debate. In his *Historia del mondo nuovo* (1565), Benzoni occupied a position between the intransigence of Sepúlveda and the protectiveness of Las Casas, although closer to the position of the latter. The devotion of Stigliani to Benzoni is evident in different octaves of the *Mondo nuovo*, where he described the Native Americans as “barbari scortesii” (VI, 21), “bruti” (XI, 7), “perfidi” (XI, 87), “zótichi” e “stolti” (XII, 22), but at the same time considered the Indians

Tarconte, Artura, Cicimmeco, Nicaona and Galafar to be better than numerous Europeans. In Stigliani's description of the Amazons the Benzonian position appears strictly connected with the orientation acquired by the poet in the *querelle des femmes*. Stigliani seems to have been influenced by the *pro mulieribus* school of thought represented by humanists such as Mario Equicola (*De mulieribus*, 1500); Baldassar Castiglione (*Libro del cortigiano*, 1528), and Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (*Declamatio de nobilitate et praecellentia foeminei sexus*, 1529). The influence that the pro-women school could have had on Stigliani's work is particularly noticeable when the poet compares the capital city of the Amazonian reign Pimpa to Venice, considered the early modern capital of the *querelle des femmes*. Like the lagoon city, Pimpa is in fact constructed on an island located in the middle of the Amazon River. This location was possibly inspired by the phantom letter addressed by the Amazons to Alexander the Great, where the warrior women explain that they "live on the other side of the Amazon River and on an island in the middle of it. The perimeter of our land would take you a year to travel; the river has neither beginning nor end. Access to it is unique" (Pseudo-Callisthenes, III, 25. Cited in Magasich-Airola & De Beer, 2006: 100). The insularity of the city however gives the poet the possibility to create a link between the Amazonian episode and the Italian reality. When the Christians are on the boat crossing the strait between Ripi and Pimpa, Stigliani reveals that the crossing is as short as the one between the shore of Padua and Venice: "Tal nel lito di Padoa è il varco breve, / ch' a Vinezia suol farsi a tutte l'ore". The Amazon River is also compared to the Adriatic Sea, creating a perfect reproduction of Venice overseas. In addition, the governmental structure of Pimpa reveals a similarity with the Venetian republic. Although ruled by a queen, the Amazonian queendom is in fact defined by Stigliani a "Repubblica" (*MN.*, XV, 94, 6). With this term, the poet indicated that the ruler did not obtain the appointment by inheritance, "ma per squitinio" (*MN.*, XV, 96, 8), in order to

avoid issues of legitimacy and succession. The queen was supported by the senate to maintain legislature and judiciary, making her comparable with the figure of the Doge of Venice.

If Pimpa can be considered a duplicate of Venice, the Amazons inhabiting it can be seen as doubles of the Venetian women that contributed to transforming Venice into the most important feminist city of the time. Venetian poetesses such as Moderata Fonte, Arcangela Tarabotti and Sara Copia Sullam abundantly contributed to the woman question with their treatises and dialogues. Stigliani seems to have been somewhat influenced by Lucrezia Marinelli's *La nobiltà et l'eccellenza delle donne, co' difetti et mancamenti de gli huomini* (1600). As I have shown in my article *Ippolita rinascimentale* (2014: 15), it is possible that Stigliani and Marinelli knew each other, as attested to by the sonnet addressed to Marinelli that Stigliani included in his *Rime* (1605: 52). As such, it seems highly probable that Stigliani read Marinella's treaty, using it as a model to construct his Amazons. In the *nobiltà*, the Venetian poetess took the Amazons as a model of feminine virtue, although she refers first to the classical Amazons located in Scythia (1600: 80), and later to the African warrior women serving prince Mutapa (1600: 83). Stigliani's suffragette Amazons are closely related to the Amazons described by Marinelli, bestowing them bravery, heroism and significance. According to the poetess, if women "s'esercitassero nelle scienze, et nell'arte militare, come fanno tutto il giorno i maschi, farebbono à loro inarcar le ciglia, et rimanere stupidi, et ammirati" (1600: 31). The influence of Marinelli's treaty on Stigliani's poem can be particularly noticed in the description of Polinesta, "donna in armi fortissima, e possente" (*MN*, XV, 97, 2), "che meglio favellasse ed intendesse" (*MN*, XVI, 18, 4).

Unlike the Amazons described by Giorgini, in Stigliani's *Mondo nuovo* the Amazons fight courageously in order to preserve their independence from men, and have no intention of submitting themselves to the Christian domination. Their quest for self-government is

evincible, for example, in canto XV, when Silvarte is declared prisoner in Ripi “come quel, ch’offendesti in tuo camino / le leggi del caribico domino” (*MN*, XV, 125). He is decapitated by the Amazons, his severed head representing the Amazonian law that the ‘men’ and ‘conquistadores’ that he represented were not able to respect.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the harbour of Pimpa can be considered a metaphor indicating the Amazonian refusal to be oppressed by men and Europeans. In the *Orlando furioso* the port of Alessandretta shaped “a sembianza d’una luna / [...] ed in ciascuna parte una rocca ha nel finir del corno” (*O.f.*, XIX, 64, 1-4) has been interpreted by Mary-Michelle DeCoste as a *vagina dentata* representing the frightful nature of the *femine omicide* (2010: 174). The same figurative reading can be applied to the description of Pimpa in the *Mondo nuovo*. The island of the Amazons is shaped like a citron (*MN.*, XV, 145, 1) with the port having “le sue bocche essere barrate / da catene d’argento attraversate” (*MN.*, XV, 143, 7-8). A chain across the entrance of the port was a very common device to prevent invasions from the enemy fleet, but the oval structure of the port could also evoke the image of a vagina protected by a chastity belt.<sup>18</sup> This item can possibly indicate the decision of the Amazons of Ripi and Pimpa to live “senza maschii in franca vita” (*MN.*, XV, 96, 2), highlighting their self-proclaimed separateness from a sexual and cultural point of view.

From these first elements we can already see how Stigliani’s *Mondo nuovo* notably differs from Giorgini’s work. Polinesta, contrary to the queen of the Amazons in Giorgini’s poem, is completely disgusted by the request of the ambassadors Archinto and Brancaspe to

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<sup>17</sup> For the connection between the severed head and law see in particular Palmer (2014). Silvia Spada Pintarelli (1993: 248) noticed that a series of biblical and mythological characters holding severed heads (David with the head of Goliath, Judith holding the head of Holofernes) were depicted in the Hall of Justice in Velturmo Castle (Brixen, Italy).

<sup>18</sup> The chastity belt was used during the early modern period in particular by nuns to protect their virginity. See Classen (2007).

submit her people to the Europeans. She declares her desire to metaphorically look inside Silvarte's mind:

Per veder quivi infra i pensieri sui  
Da che avesse cagione un sì insolente,  
Qual questo era del chiedere ad altrui  
Le proprie signorie sfacciatamente:  
Ed in che guisa entro l'ingegno umano  
Nascesse il verme, che 'l rendeva insano.  
(XVI, 12, 3-8)

Silvarte and Polinesta end up falling in love with each other during a duel, but contrary to Salazar in Giorgini's poem who forced his wife to convert to Christianity, Silvarte is unexpectedly ready to join the indigenous cult of the Sun: "T'amo, e son pronto a empir le tue richieste / Tutte da quella in poi, ch'ora m'ai fatta, / Ch'io debba adorar l'idolo celeste, / Come qui fa vostra femminea schiatta" (*MN*, XVI, 52, 1-4). This suggests that Stigliani was able to consider the Native American and European cultures as equal, although the poet's need to prevent his work from being catalogued in the *Index librorum prohibitorum* (list of prohibited books) made Polinesta convert to the Christian religion. In canto XVIII, the Amazons discover that Polinesta consigned Pimpa to Silvarte. Their reaction is a clear depiction of the emotive state of these women forced to renounce their homeland and freedom:

Le Donne a questi detti aspri, e molesti,  
Da' quali colte fur troppo improvviso,  
Immóbili restaro, ed in que' gesti,  
Che si trovar, quando sentir l'avviso:  
E in un momento scolorir vedesti  
Di mortal pallidezza a tutte il viso.  
Anzi fu chi gridò, come se stato  
Le fusse per l'orecchie il cor piagato.  
(*MN*, XVIII, 31)

In the end the Amazons lose their battle against the Europeans, and are forced to accept the new culture, religion, language and lifestyle. Stigliani is concerned about the nature of this conversion, wondering if the American Amazons were really able to make good wives for the Christians, given their forced conversion and undeniable cultural differences. This same concern was already raised in Montalvo's *Las sergas de Esplandián*, as shown by Jean M. Merrill (2008: 8). In both cases, the answer is that they do. For both Stigliani and Montalvo, women are characterised by nature, regardless of their geographical location, status or ethnicity. Stigliani follows the classical assumption that women are women due to their biological make-up, concluding that "vera, o bugiarda che si fusse questa / conversion, produsse ottimo frutto" (*MN*, XVIII, 157, 1-2). In order to create a bridge between the Old and the New worlds, the poet invites his female readership to not be surprised by the savagery and barbaric manners of the American Amazons. As the American Amazons can be compared with the European women as shown by the figure of Polinesta, the European gentlewomen can also be linked to the American Amazons. For the poet, Italian women were able to wound a man as well as, if not better, than the Amazons using the metaphorical bow and arrow provided by Cupid. Stigliani refers in particular to a "cruda Amazone" living "d'Italia alle benigne rive" that "m'ha ucciso, e morto tante volte, e tante" (*MN*, XVI, 1-2) causing him greater pain than that physically inflicted upon the protagonists of his poem by the American Amazons. The comparison between the Venetian woman loved by the poet, identifiable as Nice (Venice) celebrated in the *Rime*, and the Amazons living in Pimpa allows to read the poem as a mirror of the poet's ideology.<sup>19</sup> Stigliani is able to create a bond between his reality and the American otherness, using the myth of the Amazons as an anchor by which to dock it.

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<sup>19</sup> There are not enough references to hypothesise that the muse of Stigliani in both the *Rime* and the *Mondo nuovo* was Lucrezia Marinelli. However, the association Nice-Venice reveals the origin of this mysterious woman, who has been described numerous times by Stigliani with a mole on her forehead. In the portraits of Marinelli, the poetess is depicted with a mole on this part of her face.



The incompleteness of Agazio di Somma's *America* prevents us having a satisfying idea of the position of the author regarding women and Native Americans. However, the existing two cantos of the poem present insights about the motherhood theme, a topic that was often included both in the women and indigenous quests. The importance of the queen of the Amazons Oronta as a woman and her role of mother for Ormeno are implicit in the proper names of the protagonists. The onomastics scholarship has abundantly proved that proper names can give paramount information about the parental relationship between the literary characters, and the meaning of such relationship. A famous example is the son of Ruggiero and Bradamante in the *Furioso*, named Ruggiero as his father to stress the patriarchal lineage of the Este house (*Of.*, III, 24). Or of Circetta in Moderata Fonte's *Floridoro*, daughter of Circe and Ulysses that takes her name only from her mother, as her villain father left them "senza far motto" (*Floridoro*, VIII, 14, 8). In some cases, the name is formed from a combination of the parents' names: Floricelso is the name of Floridoro and Celsidea's son; Salarisa is the daughter of the king of Cyprus and Risamante in the *Floridoro*. The name of the father tends to be first, indicating the predominance of the men's lineage orientation in the early modern society. In the *America*, the fact that Ormeno's name starts with the first two letters of his mother's name Oronta indicates the relevant role of women in the matronymic society. The name of the unknown father, possibly called 'Meno...' (minus, less), as such can be interpreted as diminishing the role of men and fathers in the Amazonian culture.

In the same way that Stigliani wonders about the nature of the conversion of the Amazons, Di Somma reflects on the nature of the maternal instinct applying the literary device of *agnitio*. The bloodthirsty Oronta is suddenly transformed into a caring mother just by looking into the eyes of her unknown son, suggesting that unlike fathers who were often prevented from having proof of their paternity (Finucci, 2003), mothers have a natural

predisposition in recognising their own children. Oronta is moved to pity that “consapevole in se destò Natura” (*America*, I, 61, 6), and as such decides to spare the life of this young knight and take him under her protection. The transformation from ferocious queen of the Amazons, to protective mother, is attested to by the description of Oronta’s breast. This part of the body is in fact not only an identifying element of the Amazons’ persona as we have seen before, but also the most maternal part of the women’s body because of breast feeding (Manes, 2011: 58). In the description of Oronta as a bellicose woman, her breast is intimidating, evoking the warlike attitude of the Amazon: “E fa, che il teschio su le mamme penda / sgangherando le zanne in mostra horrenda” (*America*, I, 30, 7-8). However, it is exactly in Oronta’s breast that Nature inserted compassion and fear, stirring her maternal instinct. Maternal breastfeeding was denied to Ormeno as an infant, who was “esposto al nudo sen d’erma riviera” (*America*, I, 62, 3) and fed by a wet nurse, and as such the poet considered the breast as the element that was able to restore the natural relationship between mother and son. The discovery of motherhood as a natural condition was discussed, amongst the others, by Moderata Fonte. In *Il merito delle donne*, Cornelia talks about the power of maternal instinct: children “essendo pur carne e sangue della madre [...] più le tocca [...]. E così, essendo che l’amor discende e non ascende, perciò l’ama essa tanto, che [...] non può la tenera madre abandonar, né scacciar da sé le sue proprie viscere” (day 1). In addition Corinna, alias of Fonte, recites a sonnet about a young woman asked to save either her father, husband, or son from the enemy. The wise suggestion is to save the life of her son because “è natural amor quel de la madre, / verso il padre è pietà, l’altro è consiglio. / Quanto pietà, e consiglio avanza Amore, / tanto il parto, le nozze, e ’l genitore” (day 1).

The trend of treating the American Amazons as an image of European women responds to the current of thought widespread by Arciniegas (1990), Mason (1990) and Rabasa (1993)

who sustain that America should be considered a mirror of Europe. The Amazonian episodes can be read as an allegory of the society of the poets, suggesting that the debates hidden in the octaves are able to give insights more about Italian states, than giving an ethnographical idea of the New World. The debates anchor the American Amazons to the reality experienced by the poets, suggesting they could have been inspired by real ‘queens’ in their construction of the Amazonian imaginary. As such, the figure of the queen of the Amazons in Giorgini’s poem was connected to the image of the infant Catalina Micaela, forced by her own ‘free’ will to marry Carlo Emanuele I of Savoy (Altadonna, 2012: I, 9).<sup>20</sup> The Spanish duchess embodied the typical noblewoman coerced to espouse a man chosen for her by someone else, and treated as a baby factory to provide legitimate descendants to the Savoy household. On the other hand, Marzio Pieri showed that the entire episode of the Amazons in Stigliani’s *Mondo nuovo* could have been easily moved to the court of Stigliani’s patron Ranuccio I Farnese, Polinesta being a double of the duchess of Sala Barbara Sanseverino (1992: 185). Barbara was leader of the conspiracy organised by the feudal lords that plotted against Ranuccio in 1612 due to territorial disagreements. This resulted in the death of all the conspirators. Scholars such as Giovanni Drei (1954: 184), and George W. McClure (2008: 767) have shown how Barbara could be defined a *femme forte*, or even a proper ‘Amazon’ as Polinesta. The Florentine ambassador in Ferrara Bernardo Canigiani wrote that Barbara organised a tournament of ladies for the 1577 Carnival celebrations in Comacchio, and she appeared to be listed amongst the ‘cavalieri venturieri’ as a formal Amazon (Solerti, 1891: 122).

Catalina Micaela and Barbara Sanseverino are both strictly connected with the ‘territoriality’ represented by the American Amazons. Whilst they are indeed mirrors of Italian women, they are also a symbol of the Italian nationalism over the Americas previously

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<sup>20</sup> See also Fórmica (1976); Mansau (1994); Depretis, Raviola & Varallo (2010); Simal López (2014).

discussed. By marrying an Italian duke and becoming Italian, the Spanish Catalina Micaela is the representation of the political bond between Italy and Spain that allows Giorgini to strengthen his Italian claim over the New World. In Stigliani's poem, on the other hand, the desired territory represented by Polinesta is instead personified by Barbara at the Farnese court, as Ranuccio was first infatuated with her and later had her killed in order to take possession of her territories (Pieri, 1992). In contrast to the traditional image of Amazon/America carrying the severed heads of European men, Barbara and Polinesta's severed heads mark the legitimacy of the territories that they represent. For Stigliani, Barbara's head represent the corruption of his patron, able to kill the duchess merely for profit. Due to her association with the Italian Barbara, and her wedding to the Italian Silvarte, Polinesta's head can be instead considered as the symbol of the unjust failed Italian domination over the New World.

## Chapter three

### “PATAGONES, VEL REGIO GIGANTORUM”

If American Amazons represent in epic poetry the Americas that the Italians would like to possess, the Patagonian giants can be considered emblems of the visual impact that the Italians experienced of America, a new world where everything appears incommensurate. The giants are visually engaging given their extraordinary dimensions, and as such Italian poets derived their description of the Patagonians not from the historical written accounts, but from visual sources such as maps, cartouches and engravings. First of all, this poetical description of the Patagonians deriving from visual sources allow us to show how poets used illustrations and maps of the New World not only as a positioning system for the route travelled by their characters, but also as a cultural and aesthetic model for their poems. Poets drew inspiration from visual sources as much as, or even more than, from historical accounts; something that is almost ignored in scholarship and thus merits further consideration. I will show that the literary description of Patagonians was influenced by iconographical paraphernalia and pictorial creatures with which the giants were assimilated.

Secondly, the correspondence between maps and epic poems in the description of the Patagonians allow us to consider the poetical octaves about the giants as ekphrasis of the works of art they refer to. My aim is to investigate how the information acquired by a visual reading of the giants on the maps was translated into poetry, focusing on the construction of the Patagonians as political and social characters. As the Amazons, they are used by the poets to speak about their own time, giving in particular information of the Italian cultural passage between the *Cinquecento* and the *Seicento*. I will trace the evolution of the Patagonian race

starting from Ariosto's Caligorante, ideally interpreted by the first readers of the *Furioso* as a prophecy of the discovery of the Patagonians, to Girolamo Graziani's Corsicurbo, the horrible dog-headed giant that Piero Di Nepi defined as "vero trionfo del barocco *orripilante*" (1976: 103). The gradual brutalisation of the Patagonian giants in both visual and poetic works indicated how the baroque taste for violence and virulence was applied to the New World creating a more rugged idea of the Americas.

The chapter will begin with an introduction to the myth of the Patagonian giants, showing how the myth was initially used in epic poems as an evocation of the Americas. This section will help us to have a better understanding of the literary and artistic evolution of the myth, proving that visual sources were already an important component of the mythmaking process taking to the creation of Patagonians. Being visually engaging, Patagonians possibly derived from the giants represented on the maps consulted by Magellan during his journey, and later adopted by poets who continued to refer to cartographical sources in their poems.

The second section is an overview of the cartographic scenario, and how cartography has been applied so far to epic poems. It will focus on Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* as the base of the investigation, proposing the ethnographic level as a new method that should be added to existing scholarship. This ethnographic method will be applied to the arrow-swallowing trope present in numerous representations of the Patagonian giants, showing how it contributed to the negative depiction of giants in iconography. As this image of the giant swallowing an arrow down his throat is also present in Italian epic poems, it can be considered a fundamental element to understanding the negativity of Patagonian giants in poetry, and to establish the link between cartography and literature.

The following four sections are dedicated to the depiction of Patagonian giants in Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* (1575), Tommaso Stigliani's *Mondo nuovo* (1628),

Girolamo Bartolomei's *America* (1650) and Girolamo Graziani's *Conquisto di Granata* (1650). The iconographical elements present in these poems will be considered as cultural and social elements, leading to the conclusion that the evolution of the representation of Patagonian giants in poetry is connected with the arrival of the baroque taste for violence and virulence in the cartographical representation of giants and of the New World.

### **Introducing Patagonian giants**

The myth of Patagonian giants is formally introduced in the New World mythology by Antonio Pigafetta, the Vicentine chronicler of Magellan's expedition who reported the meeting with these behemoths in his *Relazione del primo viaggio intorno al mondo* (1524). According to Pigafetta on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1520, Magellan and his men first met the Patagonian giants during their exploration of South America:

Un dì a l'improvviso vedesemo un uomo, de statura de gigante, che stava nudo ne la riva del porto, ballando, cantando e buttandose polvere sopra la testa. Il capitano generale mandò uno de li nostri a lui, acciò facesse li medesimi atti in segno di pace, e, fatti, lo condusse in una isoletta dinanzi il capitano generale. Quando fu nella sua e nostra presenza, molto se meravigliò e faceva segni con un dito alzato, credendo venissemo dal cielo. Questo era tanto grande che li davamo alla cintura e ben disposto: aveva la faccia grande e dipinta intorno de rosso e intorno li occhi de giallo, con due cuori dipinti in mezzo delle galte. [...] Il capitano generale nominò questi popoli Patagoni (1999: 180).

The Patagonians welcoming the Europeans in puerto San Julián were described as friendly and naïve: "Arrivando li nostri ad essi, comensorono a ballare e cantare, levando un dito al cielo e mostrandoli polvere bianca de radice da erba, poste in pignatte di terra, che la mangiasseno, perchè non avevano altra cosa" (1999: 180). The giant called Giovanni by the

explorers was defined “molto trattabile e grazioso”, and the giant Paolo, captured by Magellan as a present for Charles V, kindly taught Pigafetta a number of Patagonian words.<sup>1</sup> Scholars agree that they should be identified with the tall indigenous people of the Tehuelche tribe, as also indicated in the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* (Pero, 2002: 104-105; Lutz and Lutz, 2002: 129; Flores de la Flor, 2013b: 64).

Patagonian giants were only one of the numerous giant populations believed to live in the New World, but the fact that Magellan and his crew spent five months with them made the story much more credible than the others, where the explorers only saw the shape of the giants from their ships, or found their remains.<sup>2</sup> Magellan’s intention to come back to Europe with proof of the existence of giants, evident in Paolo’s capture, made the entire story even more believable. Although the giant did not arrive in Europe, having passed away during the voyage, Pigafetta’s readers were probably convinced by Magellan’s intention to prove the existence of this incredible population. The survivors of the expedition confirmed to Maximilianus Transylvanus, Charles V’s secretary, that Magellan had intended to bring giants back with him to Europe. This was reported in Transylvanus’s letter to Charles V’s chief minister Matthäus Lang von Wellenburg, becoming official.<sup>3</sup> As such, the Council of the

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<sup>1</sup> On the myth of Patagonian giants see in particular Bataillon (1962); Duvernay-Bolens (1995); Vasco (2005); Sanguinetti de Bórmida (2006); Sozzi (2007); Fiorani (2009); Duviols (2009).

<sup>2</sup> Amerigo Vespucci reported in his *Mundus novus* (1503) the meeting with some giantesses in Curaçao, but he immediately took flight when their colossal companions popped up. According to Peter Martyr d’Anghiera, the Spanish explorer Lucas Vazquez de Ayllon met the giant king Datha and his wife in modern-day South Carolina (*Dec.* VII, III, 2). Fray Antonio Tello claimed that the conquistador Nuño de Guzmán discovered *quinametzí* giants’ dwellings in Tala, Mexico (*Crónica miscelánea de la sancta provincia de Xalisco*, II); and José de Acosta reported the discovery of the remains of a giant in Mexico (*Historia natural de las Indias*, VII, 3).

<sup>3</sup> “Il terzo fu condotto alle navi, ma, non volendo mangiare per il fastidio che pigliava vedendosi solo, in pochi giorni morì. Mandò il capitano delle navi a quella capanna per pigliar un altro di quelli giganti, per presentarlo all’imperadore come cosa nuova, ma nessuno vi trovò, perché tutti insieme con la capanna in altro luogo s’erano trasferiti”. Ramusio (1978, II: p. 1800).



Indies declared Patagonian giants a reality, and the term ‘patagon’ was soon introduced into the dictionaries of the time as a synonym of ‘giant’ (Gandía, 1929: 30-31; DeLoach, 1995: 13). Paula Findlen (1990: 307) shows how museums and *Wunderkammer* in all Europe were filled up with exotic objects ‘attesting’ to the existence of giants. Literary discussion groups and social gatherings hosted numerous debates concerning Patagonians; ranging from the origin of the giants, their humanity, their height, to their very existence. As noted by Antonello Gerbi, “the existence or nonexistence of giants was one of the oldest arguments in the discussion on the properties of the New World” (1973: 83). Specialist essays were published on the topic, such as John Goropius Becanus’s *Gigantomachia*, Jean de Chassanion’s *De gigantibus* (1580), and Girolamo Maggi’s treatise about Patagonians included in his *Miscellanea* (1564, I, 4, 13-24). In addition, the publication of Pigafetta’s account in Ramusio’s *Navigazioni et viaggi* contributed to the diffusion of the myth all over Europe. Still in the Eighteenth Century, Giovan Battista Vico refers to these giants living “in piedi dell’America, nel paese detto *de los patacones*” (*Scienza nuova*, XXVI).

The fame of the tale took the Patagonian giants to be soon introduced in poetic and artistic works, although their figures are more ‘evoked’ than defined. The description of the giant Caligorante in the *Orlando furioso* prepared, for example, the ground for the literary development of the myth of Patagonians in late Sixteenth Century. In his restyling of the *Furioso* that culminated with the 1532 edition, Ariosto moved the Caligorante episode from canto XIII, where it was located in the 1516 *princeps*, to canto XV (*Of*, XIII, 30-43, A; *Of*, XV, 49-62, C). In the newer version, the description of the giant met by Astolfo immediately follows Andronica’s prophecy of the discovery of America. The educated readers of the *vulgata editio* would have therefore probably associated the character Caligorante with the famous new American giants, having already projected their minds to the newly discovered

lands. Ariosto built the complicated plot of his poem with meticulous attention and, as suggested by Elissa Weaver:

Through the ordering of his stories, which I would call spatial, since it relies on separation, juxtaposition, and parallelism, Ariosto succeeds in adding to his literal, explicit narrative another narrative that is implicit. The reader of an episode is invited to see resonances of that episode in others either near to it or similar to it (in structure, theme, or language), and as a consequence its meanings multiply, develop, and complete one another (2003, 126-127).

As such, Ariosto's decision to put the Andronica and Caligorante episodes next to each other in the poem was probably not a coincidence, and could be seen as a way to evoke America in the reader's mind. As we have already seen, the poet was keen to embed the new geographical discoveries in his poem, evoking for example the presence of the Amazons in America with the escape of the *femine omicide* overseas. The prophecy of Andronica is only introduced into the *Furioso* in the 1532 edition, showing that interest in the newly discovered lands increased during the final official review of the poem, when news of Magellan's circumnavigation had already spread all over Europe. As suggested by Alberto Casadei, Ariosto had a "cauta ma non disinformata posizione sul problema della natura delle nuove terre" (1988: 83), a cautious approach that could have easily resulted in the reader identifying Astolfo as Magellan, and Caligorante as the literary emblem of the Patagonians. Astolfo's act of parading Caligorante "per ville, per cittadi e per castella" (*Of*, XV, 60, 4) is very similar to Magellan's intention to take the giant Paolo to Spain in order to exhibit him. In addition the stratagem used by Astolfo to capture Caligorante brings to mind the trick used by Magellan to handcuff the Patagonians (Ramusio, II, 876-879). Ariosto could have been influenced by the news of Magellan's periplo, embodying both the traditional epic figure of giants in literature, and the new 'real' giants that appeared in America. The very name Caligorante, usually identified by scholars with the Latin word *caligante* "fading, growing dim", or with the

Sicilian town of Caltagirone, could be even read in the *vulgata editio* as a composition of “calore logorante” (intense heat), a reference to the Tierra del Fuego where Patagonians live. The name ‘Tierra del Fuego’ was given to the southernmost part of South America by European navigators, who saw bonfires on the shore from their ships. Although these fires were used by the indigenous people to warm themselves up from the freezing temperatures, the idea that arrived in Europe was that this land had an unnaturally hot climate, shown by the always naked depiction of the Patagonians, covered only by a few leaves (Fiorani, 2009: 116-117). Ariosto did not have any role in the identification of Caligorante with the Patagonians, as the name Caligorante was already used in the 1516 edition, but early readers of the *Orlando furioso* could have read in this speaking name a clear reference to the new American giants. As suggested by Lina Bolzoni (2012: 61), *Cinquecento* readers used to play with epic poems, looking for prophecies and signs of their own destiny within them.<sup>4</sup> A clear example of this is shown in Luigi Pulci’s *Morgante*: readers of this poem believed that it prophesied the discovery of America, as it was published years before Columbus’ voyage (*Morgante*, XXV, 228-230). Furthermore, Ariosto’s placement of the octaves about Caligorante next to Andronica’s prophecy in the last edition of the poem could have possibly led Renaissance readers to interpret this as a prophecy of the discovery of the Patagonian giants.

One of the most famous evocative uses of the myth of Patagonian giants in poetry is by William Shakespeare, as noticed by Bruce Chatwin (1977, 1986). The character of Caliban in the *Tempest* (1611) is clearly modelled on the Patagonians, as can be seen in Caliban’s question to Stephano “Hast thou not dropped from heaven?” (*The Tempest*, II, 2, 131). This is an echo of the giants asking Magellan and the rest of his crew if they had come from the sky;

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<sup>4</sup> Marie-Laure Ryan (2009: 165) highlighted the popularity of an early modern table game called “The Labyrinth of Ariosto”, a sort of game of the goose where the players, after selecting tokens representing the characters of the *Orlando furioso*, had to recite episodes of the poem and impersonate the characters.

and in the plea to Setebos (*The Tempest*, I, 2; V, 1) it is possible to recognise the god to whom the Patagonians asked for help when they realised they are going to be captured (Chatwin, 1977: 95-97; 1986: 32). Stephano's desire to take Caliban with him to Naples, as "he's a present for any emperor that ever trod on neat's-leather" (*The Tempest*, II, 2, 62-63), also resembles Magellan's wish to return with a Patagonian giant. In addition, Trinculo refers to Caliban as a "puppy-headed monster" (*The Tempest*, II, 2, 131-132): this could be a clear reference to the Gran Patagon of the literary tradition, as well as to the Tehuelches disguised as dogs (fig. 28).<sup>5</sup> As in the *Orlando furioso* however, there are no explicit references to the New World; Shakespeare set Caliban's island in the Mediterranean Sea, and scholars have identified it with Pantelleria, Lampedusa and Corfu (Vaughan & Mason Vaughan, 1991: 32).

This lack of geographical accuracy is a symptom of the issue of celebrating the American *mirabilia* that we have discussed in the introduction, a phenomenon evident not only in the literature field but also in the artistic one. When Ariosto was publishing the third official edition of the *Furioso* (1532), Giulio Romano was painting the Chamber of the Giants in Palazzo Te (Mantua). The topic portrayed is of classical origin, deriving from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (I, 151ss.): Romano depicted Jupiter as punishing the giants by throwing lightning against them, aided by Juno (fig. 29). The strange element in the fresco is the presence of numerous monkeys not present in Ovid's work that, according to Bodo Guthmüller, are due to an inaccurate translation of the *Metamorphoses* by Niccolò degli Agostini used by Giulio Romano (1977; 1997: 291-307). The mistake was already present in Giovanni del Virgilio's university lesson on the *Metamorphoses*, and in one of Cariteo's sonnets: it implied that instead of a "saevaeque avidissima caedis / et violenta" [impious, arrogant, and cruel brood] (*Metamorphoses*, I, 161-162), as in Ovid's work, the giants' blood

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<sup>5</sup> See p. 159.

was producing monkeys.<sup>6</sup> Whilst one should accept Guthmüller's thesis, it is also important to take into consideration the major role played by America in the import of monkeys to Europe. A large number of primates are described by Antonio Pigafetta in his *Relazione* and, as shown by Wilma George, white-headed capuchins (or cebi) coming from South America were very popular across all of Europe (1980: 81). Their long curled tail and particular pigmentation, dark on the body and white on the face, can be recognised in Romano's monkeys, making them easily identifiable as being of South American origin (fig. 30). The connection of the giants with this particular group of primates could have easily evoked the newly discovered lands and their massive inhabitants in the eyes of Renaissance people.

Romano's giants, as well as Ariosto's Caligorante and Shakespeare's Caliban, are part of the 'evocative project' on America where poets and artists did not explicitly celebrate the new world, but added details that would call it to mind. As shown by Ernesto Livon-Grosman, Patagonians represented the amplified vision that the explorers had of the Americas (2003: 41). Being visually engaging, they were introduced in literary works only when the poets started to use visual sources representing them. This process was started by Torquato Tasso in his *Gerusalemme liberata*, whilst the poetic giants appearing before are just a mere 'watermark', to use Bellini's words, of the Patagonians.

The visual impact of the Patagonian giants is evident considering the origin of the myth itself, that is one of the most debated arguments about the Patagonians still today. There are two main schools of thoughts, one suggesting that the myth derived from the cartographical sources that Magellan had in hand during his voyage, and the other reconducting it to literature. A quick overview of these two currents will help us to clarify the role of visual

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<sup>6</sup> "Et genuit animalia que faciem hominis habebant sive symias" (Giovanni del Virgilio, *Expositio*). See Celentano (2014: 18). "Del seme de li quai produtta in terra / la simia fu, che i superi beffeggia, / imitando i paterni impii costumi" (Cariteo, *Cantan di chiari autor le sacre carte*, 9-11). See Caliaro (2005: 420).

accounts in the mythological construction of the Patagonian giants, and their influence in the successive poetic works.

As for the cartographical school of thought, in 1981 the Argentinean cartographer Paul Gallez claimed that Patagonian giants were already part of European imagination even before the discovery of America by Columbus, basing his assertion on his cartographical study of South America. His claim originated from the fact that in 1448 the mapmaker Andreas Walsperger located “*gigantes pugnantes cum draconibus*” [giants fighting with dragons] in *India meridionalis* on his *mappamundi* created in Konstanz (fig. 31). Gallez, working on the notion that *India meridionalis* was South America on Walsperger’s *mappamundi*, affirmed that the *gigantes* referred to in the map were the Patagonian giants later met by Magellan. As a result, he suggested that the Portuguese navigator could have consulted a copy of Walsperger’s map during his circumnavigation of the globe. If it is highly possible that Magellan could have had in mind Walsperger’s map, Jerry Brotton has however recently suggested that Magellan may have consulted more recent portolans and charts during his journey, such as the Behaim globe (2012: 20). A possible map that so far cartographers have not taking into consideration is the now lost map of the New World drawn by Christopher Columbus, arrived to us thanks to a copy made by the Ottoman geographer Piri Reis for his 1513 world map (fig. 4). Piri Reis informs us in a caption that his work was based on numerous cartographical representations, including a map of the New World compiled by Columbus:

From eight Jaferyas of that kind and one Arabic map of Hind [India], and from four newly drawn Portuguese maps which show the countries of Sind [now in modern day Pakistan], Hind and Çin [China] geometrically drawn, and also from a map drawn by Qulūnbū [Columbus] in the western region, I have extracted it (English translation in McIntosh, 2000: 15, 17).

On Piri Reis's map, a merry dog-headed giant dancing with a monkey is located in South America, as was probably the case in the lost map drawn by Columbus (fig. 32). Pigafetta describe the Patagonians in the same way: disguised as animals, and dancing on the shore. The similarity in the description of the Patagonians with the dog-headed giant depicted on the map suggests that Magellan could have been influenced by Columbus' map that he probably had in hand during his journey (Whittall, 2012: 113). It is probable that the presence of a dog-headed giant on the map consulted by Magellan was the catalyst for the creation of the myth of the Patagonian giants in South America. In addition, as reported by John Jane on his report of Thomas Cavendish's last journey (1591), these people used to wear masks of dog-heads,<sup>7</sup> confirming the identification of the Patagonians with the dog-headed giant drawn in Columbus and Piri Reis's maps.

In conjunction with the school of thought claiming that the myth of the Patagonian giants was born thanks to cartography, a more popular movement led by María Rosa Lida De Malkiel (1976: 93-97) and Jean-Paul Duviols (1985: 59) suggests that Magellan's expectations of finding giants in Patagonia arose as a result of reading a famous book of the time, the *Libro segundo del Emperador Palmerín*, more widely known as *Primaleón de Grecia* (1512). In this work, Palantín, prince of an exotic island, tells Primaleón of a horrible savage called Gran Patagón, who was "hijo de un desemejado animal de estas montañas y una patagona, por lo que tiene la cabeça como de can" (Marín Pina: 2003, 35) [son of a disfigured animal living on these mountains and a Patagonian woman, who has the head of a dog as a result]. According to Lida De Malkiel and Duviols, Patagonians owe their name to the famous character Gran Patagón, and Bruce Chatwin (1986: 36-40) nourished this thesis claiming that

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<sup>7</sup> "There came a great multitude of savages to the ship, throwing dust in the air, leaping and running like brute beasts, having vizards on their faces like dogs' faces, or else their faces are dogs' faces indeed". Jane (2006: 38). See Hitchcock (2003).

*Primaleón* was the type of book an early modern explorer as Magellan would have taken with him during his voyage. However, the literary origin of the Patagonians brings to mind a depiction of giants that is very different from the historical one. As we said, Pigafetta described the Patagonians as being peaceful and naive, in keeping with the stereotype that would later become famous in the Eighteenth Century with the development of primitivism and the Noble savage myth. As mentioned by Mariano Bairo (2011: 43), the docility of Pigafetta's giants evokes Dante's Anteo, their description being as such in complete contrast to the violent and horrible Gran Patagón described in the *Primaleón*.

The possibility that the myth of the Patagonian giants developed from maps such as Columbus's lost representation of the New World, rather than from a poem such as the *Primaleón*, testifies to the importance of cartography in the development of the Patagonian myth. The similarity between the merry cynocephalus giant dancing on Columbus's map and the benevolent giants met by Magellan is our starting point for a study of the myth of the Patagonian giants in the epic poems. As we will see, the huge size of the giants well marked on maps influenced not only Magellan, but also the poets describing the Patagonians in their poems.

### **The cartographic scenario**

The influence of maps and other visual sources on poetry has usually been investigated considering the cultural context in which cartographic material was produced, displayed and observed. Genevieve Carlton describes maps as "polysemous objects that could carry a range of symbolic messages depending on their context and display" (2015: 2). These 'symbolic messages' granted viewers knowledge, forming the backdrops to discussions in which many



people – including poets – participated. As such, maps might have informed the creation of poetry, contributing to shape literary understandings in the early modern period.

In some specific cases, however, it is possible that poets used maps as a direct source for their works. Maps were possibly used as geographical navigators to give poems credibility, namely in the routes followed by the characters. Examples of this trend have been reported in the volume *Cartography in the European Renaissance* edited by David Woodward (2007). Theodore Cachey shows that Andrea da Barberino's *Guerin meschino* (c. 1410s) is possibly based on Ptolemaic charts. According to the American scholar, the same toponyms appearing both in the romance and in the *tabulae* of the *Geography* “strongly suggests that Andrea consulted a Ptolemaic map” (2007: 456). In the same vein, Henry Turner argues that in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) it is possible to recognise “a direct relationship between the act of literary composition and the consultation of specific atlases, travel narratives, and histories, many published with elaborate maps” (2007: 417). In my MPhil thesis (2011), I suggested that poets made large use of maps in order to make their depictions of the New World credible. The cartographical potential of these works is evident in the traceability of the routes as a form of orientation so that a poem, as suggested by Nancy Bouzrara and Tom Conley, “could be plotted or even navigated” (2007: 434).

In this chapter, however, I will focus on and expand a second school of analysis, which considers the graphical and iconic elements depicted on maps later adopted in literary works. The poets were not solely interested in the geographical routes helpful for the verisimilitude of their poems, but were possibly also attracted by the multifarious topographic views, illuminations and legends decorating the maps. The study of such simulacra can help us to have an idea of the type of maps possibly considered by the poets, as well as explain the reason for the stylistic and aesthetic choices made by the writers. Whilst there have been a

number of studies about this visual influence cartography had on Italian literature, they all focus on a single poem, Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*. The probable reason for this focus on Ariosto's work is the easy access to the sources that Ariosto could have consulted, as the Este map collection available to the poet attracted the attention of various scholars.<sup>8</sup> In 1932 Enrico Cerulli (28), analysing the lines describing Astolfo's flight above Ethiopia, was interested in the reasons that drove Ariosto to imagine king Senap with a cross in his hand: "Senapo imperador de la Etiopia / Ch'in loco tien di scettro in man la croce" (*Of*, XXXIII, 102, 1-2). The scholar noticed that a 1339 nautical chart made by Angelino Dalorto identified this character as the "imperatorem qui nominatur Senap id est Servus Crucis" [emperor called Senap, Servant of the Cross]. This, however, does not explain the iconographical representation of the emperor holding a cross in the poem. This detail can instead be clarified if we consider, as Cerulli pointed out, the Genoese planisphere of 1457 or Jacme of Bertran's portolan chart (1491), where the emperor of Ethiopia is in fact depicted with a cross sceptre in his hands (fig. 9 and 33). It is possible that Ariosto could have consulted one of these maps or copies of them, as also suggested by the depiction of the hippogriff in modern-day Russia in the Genoese planisphere of 1457. The cross analysed by Cerulli is also an object of attention in Luciano Serra's study on the construction of the spatial dimension in the *Orlando furioso*. Serra noticed that Andronica's prophecy "Veggio la santa croce, e veggio i segni / imperial nel verde lito eretti" (*Of*, XV, 23) that referred to the discovery of the New World, could have been seen by Ariosto himself on the *Charta del navigare* sent by Alberto Cantino to Ercole I d'Este in 1502 (1974: fig. 34). On this portulan, that it is still preserved in the Estense library in Modena, "appaiono i vessilli castigliani sulle terre conquistate e queste terre sono dipinte in

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<sup>8</sup> The use that Ariosto made of maps is declared by the poet himself in his third satire: "il resto de la terra, / senza mai pagar l'oste, andrò cercando / con Ptolomeo, sia il mondo in pace o in guerra; / e tutto il mar senza far voti quando / lampeggi il ciel sicuro in su le carte / verrò, più che sui legni, volteggiando" (*Satire*, III, 61-66).

verde scuro” (fig. 35). Ariosto could have transmitted precise details and colours of Cantino’s map in his poem, allowing his readers to evoke the map whilst reading his work. This can be seen as an ekphrasis, the textual description of an image. As such, it could be claimed that cartographic representations were equally as important a source of inspiration for poets as the historiographical accounts from where poets extracted their content, if not more so. Following Serra’s line of reasoning, Alexandre Doroszlaï hypothesises that in addition to iconographic elements, written legends reported on the maps could have influenced the descriptions of the poets. Referring to the same verses of Andronica’s prophecy that Serra analysed, Doroszlaï shows that in Rosselli’s planisphere, the New World is identified as “TERRA S. CRUCIS SIVE MŪDUS NOVUS”. This planisphere was identified by the scholar as the one used by Ariosto to describe Ruggiero’s journey (fig. 36). According to Doroszlaï, “la juxtaposition de «nuovo mondo» et de «santa croce» dans le chant XV ferait écho à la légende identifiant au Monde Nouveau la Terre de la Sainte Croix sur une mappamonde” (1998: 61).

I will make an additional proposal to these arguments put forward by Cerulli, Serra and Doroszlaï, by adding a new piece of the puzzle in the osmosis between cartography and literature, the ethnographical level. I suggest that the positive/negative perception of characters in charts and portolans could have been related to their representation with certain paraphernalia, symbols and colours. This could have influenced the description of these characters in poetry. Patagonian giants are an excellent tool to investigate this phenomenon as they are the most frequently represented New World characters in early modern maps. In my research at the Huntington Library, I have uncovered more than twenty maps containing representation of Patagonian giants; a great deal more than contain representations of other New World myths such as Amazons, El Dorado, and pygmies. As already mentioned, in the collection of early modern maps known as the Huntington Library Rare Book 109496,

Patagonian giants appear in almost all of the maps representing South America, depicted or labelled as “Regnum Gigantium” or “Patagones vel Regio Gigantum” [Kingdom of the giants] (fig. 37 and 38). The 1996 collection of early modern printed maps of the Americas grouped by Philip Burden is also a very useful tool to investigate the presence of Patagones in cartography. In Burden’s *The Mapping of North America*, it is possible to spot some of the best iconographic representations of the Patagonian giants, although the work is focused on the Northern part of the American continent. Some examples are the maps of the New World drawn by Diego Gutiérrez and Hieronymus Cock (Antwerp, 1562) (fig. 39 and 40), Giovanni Francesco Camocio (Venice, c.1569), Gerard de Jode (Antwerp, 1576), and Willem Jansz (Amsterdam, 1608). In these maps, Patagonian giants are usually depicted next to short Europeans to both give a better idea of their height, and also to evoke the dominance and power of the giants thereby accentuating their monstrosity and wonderfulness (Castro Hernández, 2012: 33; fig. 41, 42 and 43). As we will see, cartographic Patagonians are visually represented as negative characters, and their negativity is transmitted to their poetical counterparts.

The element that is most likely to lead to a negative perception of the Patagonians on the maps is possibly the arrow that the giants insert into their mouths. This image was already depicted in Johannes Stradanus’ *Inventio maris Magallanici* (1580s) (fig. 44), and it became an icon of the entire Patagonian population when it was introduced by mapmakers in their works; the maps drawn by Hondius the Elder (1595) (fig. 45), Levinus Hulsius (1599) (fig. 46) and Cornelis Cleasz (1602) (fig. 47) are but a few examples. Frank Lestringant’s curiously titled *La Flèche du Patagon* (2003) analysed drawings of Patagonian paraphernalia such as the *bolas* used for hunting, and the arrows that, according to Thevet, Patagonians threw against the European ships, but not the arrow-swallowing motif. It was only recently

that Surekha Davies dedicated attention to this icon in her PhD thesis, tracing the cartographic origins of such trope (2009, 236-240). According to Davies, the image of the Patagonians swallowing the arrow on the maps derives from a reading of Maximilianus Transylvanus's *De Moluccis insulis* (1523), rather than from Pigafetta's account. Whilst Pigafetta reported that the arrow was used as an emetic in indigenous science to treat stomach ache ("Queste genti, come si sentono mal nello stomaco, si mettono giù per la gola duoi palmi e più una freccia, e vomitano colera verde mescolata con sangue: e questo perché mangiano alcuni cardoni" Ramusio, II, 1830<sup>9</sup>), Transylvanus believed that the arrow was a way for the giants to demonstrate their bravery:

Utque nostris sui admirationem facerent, demisere absque nausea sesquicubitales sagittas per guttur ad stomachi usque fundum. Quas protinus rursus extrahentes quasi ea re fortitudinem suam ostentassent, gaudere visi sunt.

[To excite our admiration of them they took arrows a cubit and a half long, and put them down their throats to the bottom of their stomachs without vomiting. Then they drew them up again, and seemed much pleased at having shown their bravery] (English translation in Pigafetta & Transylvanus, 1969: 115 cited in Davies, 2009: 239).<sup>10</sup>

Whilst it is highly probable that the mapmakers were inspired by Transylvanus' letter in the depiction of the arrow-swallowing giant, they also possibly exaggerated their depiction in order to make the giants appear more dangerous than in Transylvanus' description. Patagonian giants are often connected to wine in cartography, and to elements suggesting drunkenness, and this could have made them appear worse than in the historiographical

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<sup>9</sup> The use of the arrow as an emetic is also in Pedro Sermiento de Gamboa's account (1988, 109-23; 283-286).

<sup>10</sup> The same passage is in the letter of Transylvanus published by Ramusio "E per dar ammirazion di se stessi, si misero giù per la gola senza nausea una freccia di mezzo cubito per fino al fondo dello stomaco, la qual di subito cavando, come se per quello gli avessero dimostrato la lor fierezza, parve che se ne rallegrassin molto" Ramusio, *Navigazioni et viaggi*, p. 1799.

sources. In the 1602 map compiled by Cornelis Claesz, the Patagonian giant is depicted with a bottle of wine in his hand.<sup>11</sup> In the *Tijpus freti Magellanic* map, probably first published in Theodor de Bry's *America* (1620), one of the giants gulps down wine from a jar, whilst another gets grapes from the Dutch explorer Joris van Spilbergen (fig. 48). Mapmakers seem to suggest that Europeans introduced Patagonians to the vice of drinking, and that the giants were completely addicted to the new juice. In Levinus Hulsius' *Deliniatio freti Magellanic* (1626), a European traveller offers the Patagonian giant some quinces, renowned as a remedy for the binge in the early modern period (fig. 49). Already in the Eleventh Century, the Byzantine physician Simeon Seth explained in his *Συμεωνος Μαγισρου Αντιοχειασ Του Σηθι Συνταγμα* [*Lexicon on the Properties of Food*] that “ἐπί δέ πότῳ μασσώμενα κωλύει τόν ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου ἀτμόν ἀναδίδοσθαι τή κεφαλῇ” (Langkavel, 1868: 48) [Eaten while drinking, quince prevents the vapours of the wine from rising to the head] (Translation in Marks, 2002: Appendix B). The work was translated into Latin by Lilio Gregorio Giraldi in 1538 with the title of *Syntagma de alimentorum facultatibus*, becoming famous in Renaissance Italy as a medical and culinary text of oriental wisdom (Dalby, 2010: 86).<sup>12</sup>

Looking at the maps and engravings, one might think that instead of representing an emetic against stomach ache or a means of demonstrating bravery, the arrow was in fact a means of relieving chronic drunkenness. This idea derives from the cultural representation of giants in the ‘Gigantes y Cabezudos’ parade of Catalan origin, which spread throughout Europe and usually took place on Carnival feast days (Muir, 2005: 104). During the Carnival, the giants needed to eat and drink vast quantities due to their enormous size. This possibly

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<sup>11</sup> There are only two copies of this map by Cornelis Claesz: one is preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the other in a German private collection. For the image see Burden (1996, 178-179).

<sup>12</sup> “Post potum manducata, vaporibus vini transitum ad caput denegant”. Citation is from the bilingual edition of the work in Greek and Latin, Seth (1658: 44).

reflected the desire of the general population to gorge on food and drink before the Lent fasting began.<sup>13</sup> Although wine was connected to the cheerfulness of the Carnival period and sometimes considered a remedy against particular disease (Albala, 2006), inebriation had however a negative perception in the Italian society of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, associated with the sin of gluttony. As reported by Tom Nichols in his article on the perception of hard drinking in early modern Europe, excess wine drinking was considered a social concern in Italy, and it was condemned as a cause of disruption (2014: 146)<sup>14</sup>. In addition, the numerous representations of giants with monkeys, that we have already identified in Piri Reis's map and Giulio Romano's fresco, could have contributed to intensify the association of giants with drunkenness. Monkeys were in fact considered an allegory of the last stage of inebriation in the Medieval bestiaries (Janson, 1952: 242), and in the Renaissance period artists encouraged the identification of monkeys with wine. This was achieved by depicting them close to the God of wine Bacchus and his fellows Bacchantes, thereby making apes a symbol of the insane addiction to wine (fig. 50 and 51).<sup>15</sup> It is particularly interesting that in Maarten de Vos's *Gustus* (late Sixteenth Century), an engraving that is part of the five senses series, the monkey eats quinces to prevent binge, as the giant in Hulsius's map (fig. 52).

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<sup>13</sup> In his famous analysis of the Gargantua and Pantagruel series, Mikhail Bakhtin even showed how the vice of drinking was one of the most important manifestations of the grotesque body of the giants (1984: 281).

<sup>14</sup> Nichols points out how Ascanio Condivi in the *Vita di Michelagnolo Buonarroti* (1553) considered Michelangelo's *Bacchus* (1496-7) an allegory against drunkenness (see also Nardini, 2000: 43); while the jurist Andrea Alciati published an emblem entitled *Prudentes vino abstinent* [Wise men abstain from wine] (2004: 151-152).

<sup>15</sup> Some examples are Annibale Carracci's *A man as Bacchus Drinking Wine, with Two Youths, a Magpie, and an Ape* (Sixteenth Century), and Hendrick Ter Brugghen's *Bacchante with an Ape* (1627). See Nicolson (1958: 78); Van Suchtelen (1991: 35).

The swallowing of the arrow in the maps therefore could have communicated the idea that the Patagonian giants were drunk, awe-inspiring monsters; completely subverting the representation in the historiographical sources of the giants as benevolent and jolly big-men. This negative perception was transmitted into the literary works, where comic and ridiculous giants such as Pulci's *Morgante*, Teofilo Folengo's *Fracasso*, and François Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* were transformed in the epic poems of the Seventeenth Century into cannibalistic and bloodthirsty monsters. Although Ariosto's *Caligorante* can be defined as the literary progenitor of the Patagonian giants, he presents comic traits that differentiate him from the Patagonians. Despite being described to Astolfo by the caring hermit as "un orribil gigante / che d'otto piedi ogni statura avanza" (*Of*, XV, 43, 3-4), a cannibal and so cruel that "non abbia cavallier né viandante / di partirsi da lui, vivo, speranza" (*Of*, XV, 43, 5-6), he is the protagonist of grotesque episodes when he is frightened by the sound of Astolfo's horn, and becomes trapped in Vulcan's net that he himself used to capture travellers. Studies on the *Caligorante* episode are very rare, and are only incorporated in more general works about the *Orlando furioso*. Pio Rajna focused more on the role of Astolfo in the episode than that of *Caligorante* (1900: 264). As recently agreed by Jo Ann Cavallo (2004: 92-94), Rajna suggested that Ariosto owes a large debt to Boiardo's *Zambardo* (*OI*, I, 5, 80) in the depiction of the giant, but without considering the comic component of both of them. The grotesque making of the giant has only been highlighted by Gian Paolo Giudicetti, who defined *Caligorante* as a "gigante macchietta", and one of the best examples of dark humour in poetry (2010: 72-73). As such, the literary trend in the description of giants developed in the Sixteenth Century does not explain the brutalisation of the Patagonian giants in the following centuries, a phenomenon better explained by considering a close textual and visual analysis of the cartographic apparatus.



## Threshold Tasso

The first explicit reference to Patagonian giants in literature can be seen in the first draft of Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*. In some initial editions of the poem that Luigi Poma (1982) considered part of the "alpha phase" of Tasso's *Liberata*,<sup>16</sup> Armida's palace is not set on the Fortunate Isles, as in the vulgate, but in the Pacific Ocean (Blanke, 1962: 227-228; Gerbi, 1973). Paola Brandi (1994: 27-29) identified five manuscripts (**Bm**, **Cv**, **Br<sub>1</sub>**, **Br<sub>2</sub>**, **Mc**) and one printed edition (**M<sub>1</sub>**)<sup>17</sup> that report the so called American "ottave rifiutate" (Solerti) or "estravanganti" (Caretto), to which the manuscript **Am** analysed by Theodore J. Cachey (1992b) and Emanuele Scotti (2001) should be added.<sup>18</sup> In their trip to free Rinaldo, Carlo and Ubaldo cross the Strait of Magellan where they catch sight of the giants:

Vennero dopo gran corso al sen che detto  
ha di San Giulian l'Ibero audace:  
loco a' legni opportun, se non che 'l letto  
pieno di sirti e innavigabil giace.  
Si volser quivi a un improvviso obietto  
(è di Tifei, d'Enceladi ferace  
quivi la terra): orribili muggianti  
scopron su 'l lido i Patagon giganti. [h]

As extensively noted by Maura Gori (1990), Theodore Cachey (1992b), Paola Brandi (1994) and Sergio Zatti (1995, 1996), Tasso had a thorough knowledge of the New World, based in particular on Ramusio's *Navigazioni et viaggi* that he probably had the chance to

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<sup>16</sup> The "alpha phase" includes manuscripts and printed editions of the *Liberata* preceding **Fr**: Ferrara, Ariostea, II.474, Sixteenth Century.

<sup>17</sup> Manuscripts: **Bm**: London, British Museum, Additional 29.312, Sixteenth Century; **Cv**: Milan, Braidense Library, AC.X.15, Sixteenth Century; **Br<sub>1</sub>**: Vatican City, Vatican library, Barb. Lat. 4052 (XVL.146), Sixteenth Century; **Br<sub>2</sub>**: Vatican City, Vatican Library, Barb. Lat. 3696 (XLIV.57), 1578; **Mc**: Venice, Marciana library, it. IX.168, Sixteenth Century. Printed: **M<sub>1</sub>**: Venice: Cavalcalupo, 7th August 1580. Brandi refers to the abbreviations used by Angelo Solerti (1895).

<sup>18</sup> **Am**: Milan, Ambrosiana library, Pinelli archive group, Q.120 sup. And R.99 sup, Sixteenth Century.

read between 1562 and 1566 (Cachey, 1992b: 328). Although numerous details contained in the ‘ottave rifiutate’ have been taken from Pigafetta’s journal and Transylvanus’ letter (both in Ramusio’s first volume), Tasso did not follow the historical accounts in the description of Patagonians. According to Nicola Bottiglieri (1989: 70) and Ruggiero Romano (1998: 9), the poet was definitely inspired by the “pagina pigafettiana”, but it is probably more interesting to look at how Tasso distanced himself from the reference text, rather than focus on the similarities. The pacific Patagonian giants are turned into new Typhons and Enceladi, horrible giants of classical origin trapped under Mount Etna in Sicily. Cachey suggests that the Patagonian giants are described in these terms in the *Liberata* because “it was apparently necessary to dress up in a more elegant and appropriately poetic form the excessively humble and direct discourse of the primary source” (1992b: 337). However, it is improbable that Tasso, follower of the Aristotelian precept of the truth as a base for the epic production theorised in the *Discorsi del poema eroico* (II, 181), would have distorted the information he had in hand without a precise reason.

As we have anticipated, the motivation of this cultural transition in the description of the Patagonians should be identified in the use poets made of the cartographic sources. In his comparison of the *Furioso* and the *Liberata*, Sergio Zatti noticed that the word “carta” (*Of*, XLVI, 1, 1) or “carte” (*Gl*, I, 4, 5) used in both the poems could be a reference not only to Ariosto and Tasso’s poetic works, but also to the nautical charts both poets followed whilst writing their poems (2006: 99-101). The plural form ‘carte’ used by Tasso suggests that the poet consulted a number of maps in order to provide his work with verisimilar geographical coordinates. Although Tasso’s work was probably influenced by a vast and not easily identifiable corpus of maps, the “ottave rifiutate” of the journey towards the Pacific Ocean gave Brandi the impression that the geographical scheme in the *Gerusalemme liberata* could

have been inspired by Paolo Forlani's world map of 1565 (1994: 40). Taking the physical description of South America in the poem into consideration, the scholar identified some details that Tasso could have eventually spotted on Forlani's map, such as the inclination of the Brazilian coast towards the west, the description of the Rio de la Plata and of the San Julian gulf, as well as the presence of numerous islands in the Pacific Ocean immediately after crossing the Magellan strait. Unfortunately, these details are present in almost all representations of the Americas at Tasso's time, and are not enough to suggest that the poet could have referred to this specific world map.

A better match could be recognised in the map of the New World drawn by Diego Gutiérrez, and engraved by Hieronymus Cock in 1562 (*Americae sive quartae orbis partis nova et exactissima descriptio*) (fig. 39). As this map presents one of the best iconographic representations of Patagonian giants of the time, the identification of this map as the one eventually followed by Tasso during the drafting of the American "ottave rifiutate" will help us to understand the negative depiction of the giants in the poem. The chart was printed in Antwerp, at the time one of the most important cartographical printing centres in Northern Europe, and has been recognised by John Hébert and Richard Pfloderer as a diplomatic or ceremonial map not intended for nautical use (2000). Tasso probably looked at this map during the period he spent in Padua between February 1564 and October 1565, when he had access to the rich library of his friend Gian Vincenzo Pinelli. Cachey (1992b: 329-330) believes that it was in this exact period that Tasso was inspired to compose the American journey of Carlo and Ubaldo, however the scholar focused on the influence Tasso could have had from Fracastoro and Ramusio's works preserved in the Pinelli library, without considering the cartographical sources. Adolfo Rivolta, who worked on the Pinelli collection of Latin and vernacular manuscripts, reported that the library preserved a huge amount of

geographical and topographical maps that Pinelli managed “con amore sommo” (1933: XXX, LIX).<sup>19</sup> The manuscripts and printed editions of the Pinelli library were inventoried in two catalogues now preserved in the Ambrosiana (Milan) and Marciana (Venice) libraries, giving us a precise idea of the items preserved in the collection, and of Pinelli’s mentality.<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, the cartographical representations were not included in these inventories, having perhaps been catalogued separately. Although the exact maps included in the Pinelli map collection is not known, it is clear that Pinelli was interested in the New World material, as shown by the numerous titles of American taste appearing in the inventories. Anna Maria Raugei dedicated an article to the New World volumes collected by Pinelli, arguing that a vast number were purchased by Pinelli’s agents in Antwerp: examples include the *Historia del Perù* by Agustín de Zárate (Antwerp, 1555) and the *Cronica del Peru* by Pedro Cieza de León (Antwerp, 1554), appearing in the Marciana inventory (1992: 187-188).<sup>21</sup> The interest Pinelli had in cartography, and the acquisition of New World items from the Antwerp market, make it highly probable that a copy of Gutiérrez’s *Americae* could have been part of the updated collection of the bibliophile. As such, it is likely that it could have been used as an iconographical source by Tasso for the American octaves.<sup>22</sup> As will be shown now, the route followed by the characters in Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata* corresponds precisely with the

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<sup>19</sup> On the interest of Pinelli for geography see Bragagnolo (2008).

<sup>20</sup> Venice: Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Mss. Italiani, Classe X, 61 (6601), 1604; Milan: Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Ms. B 311 Sussidio. See Grendler (1981: 145-146).

<sup>21</sup> With “French literature” Raugei refers not only to texts about the New World printed in France, but also to the texts printed in francophone territories such as Antwerp, Geneva and Chambéry.

<sup>22</sup> The only two copies of Gutiérrez’s *Americae* survived, now preserved in the British Library (London) and in the Library of Congress (Washington, D. C.), do not seem to be connected with Italy. Gutiérrez, D., & Cock, H., *Americae sive quartae orbis partis nova et exactissima descriptio*, Antwerp, 1562, BL Maps, \*69810.(18); LoC, G3290 1562.G7. John Hébert and Richard Pfloderer report that the copy of Gutiérrez’s map preserved in the British Library was acquired around 1870 from the American bibliographer Henry Stevens, while the copy at the Library of Congress was part of the collection of the duke of Gotha. See Hébert & Pfloderer (2000: 46-51).

lands appearing on Gutiérrez's map, thereby suggesting that the poet could have used a copy of this map in his work.

Beginning with the route travelled by Carlo and Ubaldo to reach Armida's island, the first place in South America reached by the Fortuna's *navicella* is the land where "gli inospitali Antropofàgi il regno / han quivi" (*Gl.*, XV, [e], 3-4), Brazil. In the same way that Carlo and Ubaldo see the cannibals eating each other on the Brazilian shore, the viewer of Gutiérrez's map could have had an idea of cannibalistic practises looking at the three sequences representing different ways to cook or eat human flesh. In the first scene three cannibals boil a soup containing human meat, in the second a cannibal is cutting the body of a man into pieces that are hung to dry, and in the last scene a man is spit roasted by two Brazilians (fig. 53). The depiction of a sorcerer overlooking the cannibals on the map immediately gives the idea of the satanic and unsettling nature of the new lands, that the magician of Ascalona had beforehand described as "paesi inospiti ed infidi" (*Gl.*, XIV, 35, 4). Continuing along the route taken by the characters in the poem, the estuary of the Rio de la Plata in Argentina that "sette isolette ha nella bocca, e tiene / più suso una provincia infra due corna" (*Gl.*, XV, [g], 1-2), is exactly as depicted in the map, represented by the islands in the estuary and the strip of land created by the ramification of the river in its tributaries. At this point of the poem, the crusaders catch sight of the Patagonian giants: this octave will be returned to a later point. After crossing the Magellan strait, they witness the phenomenon of flying fish: "Spettacolo quivi al nostro mondo ignoto / vider di strana, e d'incredibil caccia: volare un pesce, un altro girne a nòto" (*Gl.*, XV, [j], 1-3). Although Cachey (1992b: 337) and Brandi (1994: 37) suggest that Tasso took the description of this scene from Pigafetta, we should also consider that Gutiérrez is the only mapmaker of the period that depicts a flying

fish on a map of the New World (fig. 54).<sup>23</sup> In Medieval bestiaries the flying fish (or *serra*) was an allegory of vice: “figuram illorum gerit qui in initio coeperunt bonis operibus insistere, postea, non permeantes in eis, victim sunt diversis vitiorum generibus quae illos tamquam fluctuantes maris undae mergunt usque ad inferos” [bears the image of those who initially undertake to pursue good works, <and> afterwards, not persisting in them, are overwhelmed by various kinds of sins which plunge those, all the way to the underworld, just like undulating waves of the sea] (Clark, 2006: 206-207). The presence of this monster on the map could be interpreted as a paradigm of Rinaldo himself, who loses interest in the crusade and embraces the sinful pleasures in Armida’s New World. The animal is, indeed, enlarged on the map, perhaps indicating the debauchery of the New World and its inhabitants. At this point Tasso describes the route followed by Fortuna’s ship once it passed the Magellan Strait:

A destra è lungo tratto, e quivi è il Guito  
 E co ’l ricco Perù, l’aurea Castiglia;  
 Ma la nave seguendo il manco lito  
 Vèr la terra anco ignota il camin piglia,  
 E trova un mar sì di isole fornito  
 Che l’Egeo con le Cicladi somiglia.  
 (*Gl.*, XV, [I], 1-6)

Here the first draft of the poem joins octave 42 of the vulgate, so that Armida’s palace is located on one of these islands in the Pacific Ocean that Tasso compares to the Cyclades. In other words, the crusaders are not going towards the western coast of South America, but towards the *Terra Australis Incognita* (Unknown Land of the South), a hypothetical continent that nowadays includes the South Pole and Australia, believed to exist until the Eighteenth

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<sup>23</sup> Later flying fishes appear in Cornelis de Jode’s *Speculum orbis terrae* (1593) but they are depicted close to New Guinea and considered mythological fish-birds. In mid-Seventeenth century flying fishes on the maps are usually connected to Africa as in Blaeu’s *Le Theatre du monde* (1644).

Century. Quito, Peru and the golden Castile (Castiria de l'oro)<sup>24</sup> are all present on Gutiérrez's map, as well as the *regio patalis*, a promontory believed to be part of the *Terra Australis Incognita*. The American "Cyclades" are labelled on the map as "Ronda de muchas yslas" (Ring of numerous islands) (fig. 55) and they form a circular archipelago that can be compared to the position of the original Cyclades in the Aegean Sea: we should consider that the word 'Cyclades' [Κυκλάδες] in Greek means 'circular'. In Gutiérrez's map, two mermaids casting spells on a ship are depicted close to this archipelago that includes Armida's island. In his book on the representation of sea monsters in Medieval and Renaissance maps, Chet Van Duzer identifies these sirens engraved by Cock as a symbol of vanity, as they hold mirrors and comb their hair (2013a: 39).<sup>25</sup> The representation of mermaids with a mirror and a comb is an old motif present in numerous medieval maps that the iconographer Cesare Ripa identified in the Seventeenth Century as an allegory of "Feigned love" (fig. 56)<sup>26</sup>, perhaps inspiring the illusory nature of the relationship between Armida and Rinaldo. The mermaids could reflect Armida's persona, described in the poem as a malicious siren able to seduce onlookers with her captivating gaze and the sexual aura, as well as with her magical arts. As claimed by Silvia Volterrani (1997), there are numerous elements in the poem labelling Armida as a mermaid, such as her blonde hair "che natura per sé riscrespa in onde" (*Gl.*, IV, 30, 2), her link with the sun and her mellow voice. The two mermaids in the map could also be a reference to the two "false sirene" (*Gl.*, XV, 57, 6) that Carlo and Ubaldo meet at the fountain of laughter on their way to Armida's palace. These two mermaids could represent the

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<sup>24</sup> Guito or Quito was at the time a province in the kingdom of Peru; Castilla de oro included nowadays Columbia and Panama.

<sup>25</sup> The mermaid holding a mirror is located close to South Africa in Pierre Desceliers's planisphere (1550) preserved at the British Library, Add. MS. 24065.

<sup>26</sup> "Falsità d'amore, overo inganno. Donna superbamente vestita, terrà con le mani una serena, che guardi in un specchio". Ripa (1618: 172).

sense of wantonness and pleasure of the entire island. However, a closer look at the mermaids in Gutiérrez's map reveals that unlike her companion, the mermaid with her back to the viewer is not holding a mirror, but instead a shield. In my opinion, the bulging and convex surface of the object, combined with the manner in which it is being held by the mermaid, indicates that this artefact is in fact a buckler (fig. 57). This type of shield was very common during the Renaissance period, forming part of the typical panoply of fencers and soldiers. There are numerous representations of bucklers in the art of fighting manual *Opera nova de l'arte de l'Armi*, written by the fencing master Achille Marozzo in 1536 (fig. 58). This would therefore mean that the two mermaids in Gutiérrez's *Americae* hold a mirror and a shield respectively; these are the objects that are most symbolic of the episode that takes place in Armida's garden. The mirror is used by Armida to cast her spell on Rinaldo, feeding her narcissism, and creating an illusory world to satisfy her ego.<sup>27</sup> In contrast, the shield given to Carlo and Ubaldo by the magician of Ascalona is used to free Rinaldo from Armida's spell. As suggested by Beatrice Corrigan, the shield can be considered an antithesis of the mirror in the general antithetical structure of the poem, as Rinaldo is able to recover from Armida's charm by looking at his reflection in the adamantine surface of the shield (1956: 174). Therefore, the location of Armida's island in the same area as the mermaids is a strong indicator that Tasso could have followed Gutiérrez's map for the American journey of his characters. Following Zatti's suggestion about the identification of the 'carte' quoted in the poem with maps, we could even hypothesise that the "magiche carte" (*Gl.*, XVI, 26, 4) that Armida examines when she leaves Rinaldo alone in the garden, are a reference to the

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<sup>27</sup> The double mirroring of Armida and Rinaldo in canto XVI has been one of the most studied episode of the entire poem, that scholars has usually identified with solipsism, lust and love. See in particular Fredi (1981: 147-148); Zatti (1983: 70-71); Günsberg (1983); Del Giudice (1984); Metlica (2008).



cartographic representation Tasso would have used to ostensibly locate Armida's *locus amoenus*.

Gutiérrez's map has been recently used as a case study for the application of the modern concept of 'affective cartography' to early modern maps (Iturrioz Aguirre, 2009).<sup>28</sup> The study, carried out by a team of scholars from the Technical University of Madrid (Spain) and the Universidad Nova of Lisbon (Portugal), suggests that the map can communicate the political agenda of the authors by analysing factors such as the orientation of sea monsters, the display of human settlements, and even the blank spaces left on the map. According to the scholars working on this project, the Patagonian giants engraved by Cock are positive characters, depicted as primitive and kind beings along the line of Greek sculptures. They would be less fearsome than the cannibals depicted in Brazil, being used as a tool of the colonialist legitimising discourse in order to indicate that Europeans were more interested in the Brazilian lands, than in the vast emptiness of Patagonia. Although affective cartography is a useful tool to analyse early modern maps and that it is certainly a branch that merits further exploration, it is possible that by not taking the iconographical sources used for the depiction of giants into account, a falsified reading of the scene could result. Gutiérrez's map shows, indeed, a depiction of the Patagonians in line with the traditional representation of classical giants in the Renaissance period (fig. 40). The human aspect of the Patagonians, their long hair and beard, their muscular body, their half-naked and wearied depiction are all traits that we can recognise in the representation of the mythological giants in famous painted gigantomachies of the time, such as the one depicted by Giulio Romano in Palazzo Te (Mantua, 1532-1535) (fig. 29), or by Perino del Vaga (Piero Buonaccorsi) in Andrea Doria's

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<sup>28</sup> The concept of "affective cartography" has been formulated for the first time in 2008 by a team of scholars of the RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia. It is considered as a branch of cartography considering the depicted information on the maps as personal traits of the cartographers or of the users of that map. See Cartwright (2008).

palace (Genoa, 1531-1533) (fig. 59). The classical giants were considered negative characters, due to their unsuccessful attempt to banish Jupiter from Mount Olympus that was thwarted by the Olympians aided by Heracles. The iconographical similarities between classical and Patagonian giants therefore resulted in the Patagonian giants being perceived as negative characters.

Since antiquity, gigantomachy has been used as a propaganda tool to show the political situation of the time (Rae, 2010). The Renaissance period is no exception. The art historian Frederick Hartt (1958) suggested that in Romano and Perino's frescos Jupiter represents Charles V, while the giants usually wearing turbans are the personification of his Turkish enemies. As both these gigantomachies were depicted in connection with the visit of Charles V to Mantua and Genoa, the use of the gigantomachy theme was probably a way to honour the Hapsburg dynasty celebrating the demise of the Islamic forces at the hands of Charles' army. According to William Eisler (1990: 338), the Hapsburgs used the gigantomachy as a leitmotif of national identity. This is shown by the series of drawings of the Chamber of the Giants by Romano, requested by Antoine Perrenot of Granvelle, chief adviser of Charles and his son Philip. It should not therefore be surprising that the same theme of the gigantomachy could have been adopted in Gutiérrez's *Americae*, as the diplomatic map engraved by Cock was intended to flatter King Philip II of Spain, successor of Charles V. It is probable that this map was as an imperial claim of the New World by the Spanish Hapsburg Empire, as shown by the Hapsburg coat of arms held by a winged Victory, and the label dedicated to the discovery of Peru funded by Charles V (fig. 39). This thesis is further supported by Peter Barber, head of map collections at the British Library. Barber believes that in the map the crowned figure depicted on Neptune's carriage and directed towards the New

World should be considered as a representation of King Philip himself, who took possession of the new lands overseas thanks to the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) (fig. 60).<sup>29</sup>

Especially significant in this context is the gigantomachy depicted on the ceiling of the portico in the Genoese triumphal arch in Antwerp, erected to mark Charles V and Prince Philip's entry into the town (1549). As Cock was one of the numerous artists involved in the building of the *tableaux vivant* for the festivities (Bussels, 2012: 37), he probably had the opportunity to admire the splendid fresco of the giants storming Mt. Olympus painted by his colleague Franz Floris. Although there is no visual record of the fresco, Carl van de Valde (1975, 168-169) suggested that a copy of the painting was etched years later by Balthasar van den Bos, providing a plausible idea of what Floris' fresco would have looked like (fig. 61). In Bos' engraving, the giants are figuratively and symbolically very similar to the Patagonian giants drawn by Cock on Gutiérrez's map, highlighting the continuity in the negative depiction of giants in the New World.

The absence in the map of the giantesses mentioned by both Pigafetta and Transylvanus (Ramusio, II: 1829-1830, 1799) is indicative of Cock straying from the reference texts, denoting the link between the Patagonians and the classical gigantomachy where giants are only male. Their masculinity is emphasised by the absence of clothes, essential for highlighting their muscular body that communicates their violent and hubristic nature. Although Pigafetta reported that Patagonian giants used to dress up in the warm skin of the guanaco (Ramusio, II: 876), and in André Thevet's *Les Singularitez de la France antarctique* Patagonians "se vestent de peaux de certaines bestes, qu'ils nomment en leur langue, *Su*" (1557: 108), nakedness is a common characteristic of the Patagonians' iconography. The cold climate of Patagonia contributed to creating the image of these giants

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<sup>29</sup> Curator video for the "Magnificent Maps: Power, Propaganda and Art" exhibition (2010) available on the British Library website: <http://www.bl.uk/magnificentmaps/map3.html>

as macho men able to easily resist low temperatures, making their virility a starting point towards their brutalisation. Whilst the depiction of the giants in Gutiérrez's map is not as negative as it will be in later cartographic representations, where giants are depicted as drunkards and brutes, it is however a first step towards the desertion of the idyllic idea of Patagonian giants derived from the historical accounts. In this iconographical apparatus pushing Tasso towards a negative perception of Patagonians, one can recognise an evolution towards an ideal of machismo and virility so far unknown. Of course the notion of brutish force in the giants precedes the invention of the Patagonians, but we are focusing here on this specific group of South American giants that were originally described as peaceful and good-natured. Tasso's proud Patagonian giants, standing mighty on the shore and roaring like beasts, ushers in a new perception of strength and power that will reach its peak during the Baroque period. In the *Gerusalemme liberata*, Patagonians are not yet as violent as they will be in the Seventeenth-Century epic poems, but a brutal aspect is evident in their depiction, setting them halfway between the two centuries. They differ from Boiardo's Zambardo or Ariosto's Caligorante who preferred to capture Orlando and Astolfo respectively using a hidden net rather than brute force. However, they remain confined on the shore, unable to unleash their ferocity against the sailors of Fortuna's *navicella*, observing them from afar. The masculinisation of the Patagonian giants in the *Liberata* is in line with the entire poem, that the scholar Laura Benedetti (1996) reads as an eradication of the feminine principle represented by the pagan heroines Clorinda, Armida and Erminia, establishing a new model of society based predominantly on the masculine. As will be seen in the next section, in order to astonish their readers, Tasso's followers will use more and more extreme descriptions of the Patagonians, reproducing the baroque violent giants depicted on maps in their poems.

## Tommaso Stigliani's *socchi*

In Tommaso Stigliani's *Mondo nuovo*, the power and violence of the Patagonians is immediately evoked by a number of objects that the Italian knight Silvarte and his companions find on the shore: a "grossa catena d'or gittata in terra, / ch'a gran fatica con due man s'afferra" (XIII, 139) and "vestigi umani / grandi al par di tre nostri in sabbia stesi" (XIII, 140). Due to these objects, Christian heroes realise that: "De' Patagon questi essere i paesi, / giganti robustissimi, e membruti, / famosi in tutta América, e temuti" (XIII, 140).<sup>30</sup> This thesis is confirmed by prince Dulipante who, abandoned by his crew in Patagonia, tells Silvarte that he had been captured by one of these anthropophagus giants. One can immediately see the reference to Homer's Polyphemus, previously celebrated by Stigliani in a pastoral poem published in Milan in 1600. In the *Polifemo*, the giant is spurned by the nymph Galatea, with the same melancholic tones used by Theocritus in his eleventh *Idyll*. In the *Mondo nuovo*, however, Stigliani reintroduces the cruellest characteristics of the Cyclops, derived from the *Odyssey*:

Io pur'addentro con quei tre men giva  
per cercar novità nella foresta,  
e vidi un uomo altissimo, ch'arriva  
l'arbóree cime coll'eccelsa testa.  
Con una grossa trave in man veniva  
concia a foggia di dardo, e senza vesta,  
fuorchè con socchi a i piedi, e con angusto  
manto di morta pelle al solo busto [XIV, 8].

A giant shepherd here his flock maintains  
Far from the rest, and solitary reigns,  
In shelter thick of horrid shade reclined;  
And gloomy mischiefs labour in his mind.  
A form enormous! Far unlike the race

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<sup>30</sup> In the 1617 edition, Stigliani described Patagonians as "Fortissimi Giganti, e smisurati, / Noti in tutto quel Mondo, e paventati" (XV, 137, 7-8).

Of human birth, in stature, or in face;  
As some lone mountain's monstrous growth he stood,  
Crown'd with rough thickets, and a nodding wood.  
[*Odyssey* by Alexander Pope, IX, 187-192].

The connection with Homer's masterpiece is evident in the description of Patagonians as cannibals, and in the cave on the shore enclosed by a large rock where Christians are kept prisoners searching for a way to escape. The big sharp pole held by the giant in the *Mondo nuovo* reminds the reader of the object Ulysses used to blind the Cyclops, and the giants in both texts are attacked (blinded in his only eye in the *Odyssey*, killed by a bomb in the *Mondo nuovo*), leading to the anger of the other giants/Cyclopes. Without calling Stigliani's debt to the poetic classical tradition into question, it should be noted, however, that some details in Stigliani's description of giants are derived not from the literary field, but from the visual field, as will be shown. Particular characteristics attributed to the giants are in fact not present in the literary sources and in the written historical accounts about the New World, but in visual documents.

It is possible that Stigliani had access to geographical sources during the composition of the *Mondo nuovo*. The accurate layout of the route followed by Silvarte in South America, Dulipante in the Caribbean, and Columbus in North America; the precise use of New World toponyms, and the rigorous description of the geographical shape of the new continent observed by Archinto during his flight over America (*MN.*, VII, 87-98) makes it highly probable that Stigliani used maps to provide his poem with *verisimiglianza* (Aloè, 2011). In some verses, Stigliani even refers to specific circles of latitude and lines of longitude to provide his readers with a clear idea of the geographical position occupied by his characters. This is the case of Arpaliste, who declared to his companions that the Christian fleet was located "di là dall'Equatore / fra 'l Capricorno, e 'l circolo dell'ostro / per trentacinque gradi, e

con maggiore / da Aiti distanza, che dal Mondo nostro” (*MN.*, XIV, 92, 1-4) specifically indicating an area close to the Uruguayan coast.

According to García Aguilar “es probable que [Stigliani] manejara el mapa de Hulsius publicado en 1626” (2003: 105) [it is probable that Stigliani handled Hulsius’s map published in 1626]. However, as accurate references to the New World geography were already present in the 1617 edition of the *Mondo nuovo*, the poet might have also used the works of earlier cartographers such as Gerardus Mercator and Abraham Ortelius. For the description of North America, Stigliani could have in particular referred to Girolamo Ruscelli’s *Tierra Nueva* (1561) showing the discoveries of Jacques Cartier and Giovanni da Verazzano (fig. 62). In this map all the main lands visited by Columbus in canto XVII are depicted, and the toponyms are exactly the same used by Stigliani in the poem. In addition, the importance that cartographical sources could have had in the drafting of the *Mondo nuovo* is attested to by the map of the New World appearing on the frontispiece of both editions of the poem (fig. 63). It is likely that this woodcut was made precisely for Stigliani’s poem, as it is not possible to associate it with any early modern map of the Americas.

There are a number of elements that Stigliani might have taken from geographical sources that are not present in the historiographical accounts. One of the clearest examples is the nakedness of the Patagonians. Stigliani writes that the giant met by Dulipante was “senza vesta”, although the poet was aware that Patagonia was a freezing land: “E cominciato essendo in ogni prora / L’aer freddo a sentirsi, e di gel pregno” (XIII, 137, 3-4). In a copy of the poem preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele in Rome (71.2.A.13), Stigliani himself wrote down that his poem “è tolto di peso dalla storia del Ramusio” (García Aguilar, 2003: 107) suggesting that he read Pigafetta’s journal contained in Ramusio’s collection. However, the poet intentionally disregarded Pigafetta’s account of the Patagonians

covering themselves with guanaco skin. Instead, as we saw before, it is in the iconographical sources that Patagonians are depicted naked, usually with a few leaves around their hips, and with the legs and chest bared. In Johannes Stradanus's *Inventio maris Magallanici* (1580s), for example, the idea of Patagonia as a warm land is shown by the presence of Apollo, the god of the Sun, in the middle of the engraving; as well as by both the indigenous people and the giant depicted bare-chested (fig. 44).

Another element to take into consideration when arguing for Stigliani's dependence on iconographical accounts of the New World is the *socchi* (or *socci*) that Stigliani's giant wears. *Socchi* were light, low-rise shoes, similar to sandals, popular with Ancient Greeks and later adopted by Romans. In William Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* (1977), *soccus* is described as "a slipper or low shoe, which did not fit closely" used by Roman comic actors, in contrast with the buskins used in tragic performances. Pigafetta wrote about Patagonians' feet so much that numerous scholars believe that the name 'Patagones' given by Magellan was due to their big feet, 'pata' in Spanish. However, Pigafetta did not refer to any particular type of footwear, sustaining only that "li piedi del gigante erano rivolti nella detta pelle [del guanaco] a modo di scarpe" (Ramusio, II, 876). Why, then, did Stigliani's giant wear these particular shoes? In the *Mondo nuovo* the word "socchi" does not appear at the end of the verse, so we know that it was not there for rhythmical reasons. Instead, the origin should be investigated in the cartographical representations of the New World where Patagonians are depicted with *socchi* on their feet, such as in Levinus Hulsius's *Map of Southern South America and Tierra del Fuego* (1599) (fig. 64). As we can read in Girolamo Cardano's *Somniorum synesiorum* (1562, ch. LII), *socchi* allegorically meant 'pompan' (procession) in antithesis to the buskins meaning 'voluptatem' (pleasure). In the Renaissance period, *socchi* were used by bishops and cardinals as part of the *pontificalia* for the



celebration of the Mass and other sacraments, as well as during pontifical procession (Lippini, 1990: 163). The depiction of a giant wearing *socchi* can be considered a parody of the ecclesiastical system: an object symbolising the Catholic Church as the *socchi* were attributed to monstrous giants without manner and religion living in the further part of the world. In the Seventeenth Century the parody could not be as explicit as it was in the previous century, when Ambroise Paré was able to publish engravings of marine monsters in his work *Les Oeuvres* (1575) that clearly represented monks and bishops: “Monstre marin, ayant la teste d’un Moyne” [Marin monster, with the head of a monk] (fig. 65), and “Figure d’un monstre marin, ressemblant à un Evesque, vestu de ses habits pontificaux” [Marine monster, resembling a bishop dressed in his pontifical garb] (Huet, 2004: 131-132; fig. 66). With the advance of the Counter-Reformation, censorship became increasingly restrictive, and artists were constrained to limit their parody to fewer elements that could easily appear misleading. This process has been well analysed by Jeffrey N. Peters (2004) in *Mapping Discord*, where the scholar focuses on the allegorical cartography of Seventeenth-Century France to show the role of maps in political and social debates in line with the time they were produced. In the Seventeenth Century, only the *socchi* remains of the pontifical garb that Paré used to dress his monsters, the sole garment that can be used to parody the Catholic Church without the risk of being excommunicated. The *socchi* worn by Stigliani’s giant can be considered an ekphrasis of this cartographic parody, an easy way to mock the ecclesiastical system and avoid the censorship. This could perhaps result surprising as the *Mondo nuovo* has been considered by numerous scholars as a Counter-reformation poem, and Stigliani himself has been defined by Marzio Pieri as affected by a “fraternal conformism controriformistico” (1976: 215). Clizia Carminati (2008) even showed how Stigliani possibly collaborated with the ecclesiastical powers to convict his poetic rival Giovan Battista Marino since 1607. However, as suggested

in my Mphil thesis (2011: 18-51), the *Mondo nuovo* contains numerous elements that go against the Catholic Church's ideology, such as the critique of Christians that in America "predando andaro in ogni piazza, e foro, / in ogni tempio, e casa a dieci, a cento" (XXVI, 123, 3-4). The description of a Patagonian giant wearing *socchi* is a complementary piece of a puzzle in the revision of Stigliani's position as a counter-reformist, helping the scholarship to better consider the meaning of his poem. It is possible that Stigliani took inspiration from the cartographic depiction of Patagonians with *socchi* to parody a powerful religious figure of his own time, Pope Clement VIII, through his description of the terrible Patagonian giant. Stigliani wrote that the giant "cosa umana egli a noi non somigliava / ma divina mirandolo sì alto" (MN, XIV, 10, 1-2), so it would seem possible that he could have referred to someone very powerful in the Church's hierarchy. The giant's cistern "orrenda / di sangue piena" (MN, XIV, 12, 1-2) and the epithet "crudel divoratore degli uomini" (MN, XIV, 13, 1-2) suggest he could be someone who spilt a lot of blood in order to achieve his goals. There are also a number of references in the text to the gold owned by the giant; such as the golden hooks where the lacerated bodies were hung, and the golden chain obstructing the entrance of the giant's cave. Pigafetta did not write anything about Patagonians' treasures, and the gold might be a reference to the Roman Church's greed and opulence strengthened at that time by the link the Vatican had with colonial Spain. Considering that Stigliani started writing his poem in 1600, as proved by a letter of Pirro Visconti Borromeo to duke Vincenzo I Gonzaga (Morandotti, 1981: 156-157), it seems highly probable that the powerful authority Stigliani was referring to was Clement VIII, who remained in office until 1605. Clement VIII, who was supported by Spain during his papacy, approved the death warrant of Giordano Bruno in 1600, as well as the death sentence of other thinkers considered heretics. Stigliani was in Rome during that period, as shown by his attendance at the marriage of Ranuccio I Farnese

with Margherita Aldobrandini, and it is possible that he was present at the execution of Giordano Bruno in Campo de' Fiori.

In his *De immenso et innumerabilibus* (1591), Bruno used Patagonian giants to prove his theory of spontaneous generation and the polycentric principle of human nature:

[...] Quia multicolores  
sunt hominum species, nec enim generatio nigra  
Aethiopum, et qualem producit America fulva,  
Udaque Neptuni vivens occulta sub antris,  
Pygmeique iugis ducentes saecula clausis,  
Cives venatura Telluris, quique minaerae  
Adstant custodes, atque Austri monstra Gigantes,  
Progenies referunt similem, primique parentis  
Unius vires cunctorum progenitricas.

[...] For of many colours  
Are the species of men, and the black race  
Of the Ethiopians, and the yellow offspring of America,  
And that which lies hidden in the caves of Neptune,  
And the Pygmies always shut up in the hills,  
Inhabitants of the veins of the earth, and custodians  
Of the mines, and the Gigantic monsters of the South,  
Cannot be traced to the same descendent, nor are they sprung  
From the generative force of a single progenitor.  
(Slotkin, 1965: 43).

Supporting the existence of unlimited worlds, Bruno believed that Patagonian giants, as well as Indian people, were non-Adamites from another progenitor, as he already suggested in *La cena de le ceneri* published in 1584 (Ricci, 1990; Fiorani, 2009: 118). Closely analysing the *Mondo nuovo*, it is possible to suggest that Bruno and Stigliani were sharing opinions on this topic, and that Bruno's execution might have influenced Stigliani in his criticism against Clement VIII. For instance, Stigliani's alter ego Cavalier Calvo tells the Christian hero Salazar that the forefathers considered the existence of other human beings beyond the Pillars of Hercules impossible. In his speech, clear echoes of Bruno's philosophy can be heard:

Per cagion, che da Dio stat'era fatto  
Nell'Emisperio nostro Adamo, ed Eva,

Che furo i primi semi, onde s'è tratto  
Ciò, che per tutto d'uomini s'alleva:  
Nè trapassato quà per alcun patto  
Il germe uman, crescendo, esser poteva,  
Per l'ondosa del Mar cupa palude,  
Che frapposta dintorno il varco chiude.  
(*MN*, XXI, 148)

In Stigliani's poem, indigenous people and monstrous creatures met by Europeans in America have thus a non-Adamitic origin, as supported also by Giordano Bruno. In order to identify the Patagonian giant as Clement VIII, we should also consider that giants in the *Mondo nuovo* are cannibals; this could be read as a reference to heretics because, as suggested by Peter Burke, cannibalism was associated precisely with heresy during the Renaissance period: "Eating people [...] had long been a symbol of being less than human, associated with heretics" (2004: 28). This seems to be a reversal of the situation where Stigliani suggested that the Pope was the real heretic for having convicted Giordano Bruno and other philosophers.

The patronage relationship bonding Stigliani to Cardinal Cinzio Aldobrandini, nephew of the Pope, did not allow Stigliani to express his parody more explicitly. However, Stigliani provides clues to the attentive reader indicating the allegory of the text, a device that the poet often adopted in his poem. For example, the 'pesciuomo' (manfish) living in the Rio de la Plata is an explicit parody of Giovan Battista Marino; as we have already seen, the queen of the Amazons Polinesta is the alter ego of the duchess Barbara Sanseverino; in the octaves devoted to El Dorado it is possible to recognise a critique of Pope Paul V's nepotism; while princes and courtiers of Brandana Island reflect the Farnese court where Stigliani lived for eighteen years. By dressing his Patagonian giant in the same shoes worn by the iconographical giants, Stigliani was able to construct a cautious parody of the Catholic Church, using maps not only as a route indicator for his characters, but also as a social

instrument. The use of the cartographic sources completely transformed the benevolent historical image of the Patagonians, making the giants an emblem of the clerical system that the poet considered corrupt and abhorrent.<sup>31</sup>

### **The flight of the roc in Bartolomei's *America***

In his study about of the cultural and historical phenomena of the baroque period, José Antonio Maravall pointed out that violence and masculinity were evident in baroque art due to the awareness of violence in the Seventeenth Century. According to Maravall, “the real violence was probably no greater, no more harsh in the Seventeenth Century than in prior epochs, but consciousness of violence was more acute, as was acceptance of it, which came to inspire an aesthetics of cruelty” (1986: 162). Having been the product of the baroque aesthetic taste, maps produced in the last years of the Sixteenth Century and in the Seventeenth Century reflect this cruelty and violence that Maravall attributed to the general artistic taste, and the arrow-swallowing Patagonian can be seen as one of the best representations of the new violent trend. The image was borrowed by Girolamo Bartolomei in his *America* (1650), where

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<sup>31</sup> In a letter to Ippolito Aldobrandini Stigliani complains against the greed of a prelate: “Ma l’Arciprete del luogo, che è un Don..... vuol ch’io ne paghi la decima del due per cento, non secondo il real valor dell’entrata (come comanda la Bolla doversi fare) ma computando in esso la spesa delle coltivazioni, la quale veramente non è entrata, ma è uscita” (1651: 34); in a letter to the Cardinal of Santa Cecilia he refers of a Monsignor only interested in collecting money: “Onde è cominciato a nascervi un doppio inconveniente, che nè il popolo, e clero vive con freno, nè esso Monsignor puo’ sbrigar compitamente alcuni suoi interessi di denari, e di robbe, ch’egli vi ha consistenti in vari crediti sparsi per la diocesi. Per questo avendo egli preso spedito di trasferirvisi di persona, non tanto per governare, quanto per riscotere...” (1651: 47). The perception that Stigliani had of the Roman Church is also confirmed by his use of the myth of El Dorado in the *Mondo nuovo*. In the XV canto the king of Maranhão Giaferre advises the Italian knight Silvarte to visit El Dorado. Giaferre claims that the king of Peru has numerous people under his control, but that El Dorado “in copia ha più quel, che cercate vui” (XV, 79), that is gold. As Silvarte is the progenitor of the Borghese family (*MN*, XII, 62), this reference seems to indicate the greed of Pope Paul V, born Camillo Borghese, who was the current pope during the time Stigliani wrote his poem. Paul V was in fact accused by his peers of giving power and riches to his own family, by taking advantage of the papal authority, and of nepotism towards his nephew Scipione Borghese.

the character Amerigo Vespucci and his companions, going ashore in Puerto San Julián, bump into the terrible giants:

Del novo Mondo in quella estrema parte  
Com'huomini rei che 'l Cielo abbia sbanditi  
I Patagoni, onde si pregi Marte,  
Fra campagne abitâr, fra rive, e liti:  
Ricchi di forze, orbi d'ingegno, e d'arte,  
Degni che come Mostri altri gli additi,  
Tal torreggiaro grandi di statura  
Ch'huom de' nostri non giunga a lor cintura  
(XXVI, 38)

Patagonians are defined as barbarians, villains, ogres, “gigantea canaglia” (XXVII, 46, 5) and “turba insana” (XXVII, 46, 2). The very Bartolomei, in the allegorical reading of his own poem, explains his vision of the Patagonians:

Il monte alpestre, dal quale discendono i Patagoni, figura quello della superbia, dal quale vengano i giganti d'impietate a fare ingiurie altrui. Le villose scorze di fere, onde s'avvolsero quegli, denota la rozzezza, ed inculteza, cui vestano nell'animo questi. La vasta mole del corpo di quelli, la bruttezza del sembiante, segna l'immanità de' costume, e l'orrore dell'operazioni di questi, i quali nelle guerre, che nuovono a gli huomini piccioli dall'umiltà, vibrano non meno di quelli sassi, e fresse di violenze, e d'ingiurie, bramosi non meno de finti antichi figlioli della terra Enceladi, e Briarei di squarciarne il cielo della mente umana, stendendo le mani dell'impietà loro, e quindi ritrarne prigioniero il Giove della ragione. La vittoria, che riporta Amerigo de' Patagoni giganti, dimostra che la giustizia trionfa dell'impietade (1650: 386).

What transformed the peaceful and benevolent Patagonians described by Pigafetta into such terrible monsters? Bartolomei's episode clearly derives from Pigafetta and Transylvanus's accounts in some scenes; the giant lowering the arrow into his mouth (“scioglie / dalla sua chioma lunga freccia, e 'n bocca / la caccia dentro”, XXVII, 18, 1-3), dancing on the shore (“a dar segno di destrezza il piede / in giro move, e mentre salta, e danza” XXVII, 19, 1-2), and seeing himself for the first time in the mirror given to him by the captain (“gli offerse cortese / uno specchio, che crede che sia grato / allor ch'n esso egli si sia

specchiato”, XXVII, 20, 6-8). However, it is in the comparison of these actions in the poem and in the historical accounts that one can notice the gap between them, and Bartolomei’s different interpretation of the primary sources. In the *America*, the giant swallows the arrow as an “atto di fierezza” (*America*, XXVII, 18, 8), in contrast to the emetic and joking use of the arrow in Pigafetta and Transylvanus’s works. The historical giant dancing simplistically on the shore is likened by the poet to a gaited bear (XXVII, 19, 5-8), and the mirror not only scares the giant looking at himself for the first time, but he feels “orror dal proprio crin selvoso; e tetro, / e dal deforme mascherato viso” (*America*, XXVII, 21, 3-4). This negative description of the Patagonians can once again be linked to the iconographical sources used by the poet to delineate the meeting of the giants with Vespucci. Before analysing these sources we should, however, clarify why Bartolomei substituted Magellan with Vespucci for the role of the discoverer of the Patagonians, as the iconographical sources are possibly connected with such replacement.

Indicating Vespucci as the first explorer of Patagonia and of the Magellan strait, Bartolomei seems to anticipate a modern theory suggesting that the giants described by Amerigo Vespucci in his *Mondus novus* (1503), were actually the same giants met years later by Magellan. The historian Carlos Sanz López (1960: 430-431), followed by John F. Moffitt and Santiago Sebastián (1996: 151-152), suggested that Vespucci’s giants were the Patagonians, as they believed that the river depicted in the *Das sind die new gefunden Menschen* (‘These are the newly-found people’, 1505), one of the most famous engravings inspired by Vespucci’s work, was the Argentinian Rio de la Plata (fig. 67). Consequently, the giants depicted on the banks of this river were identified as Patagonians. In the last years, this theory has found various supporters and opponents, but it has been firmly criticised by the leading expert of the iconographic construction of the New World Jean-Paul Duviols, who

claimed that “la terre que Vespucci décrit est, en effet, très fertile et les indigenes sont des anthropophages, ce qui peut correspondre à des groupes tupi-guaranis, mais non à des Tehuelches de Patagonie” (1985: 56n.) [the land described by Vespucci is, indeed, very fertile and the natives are cannibals, who may be identified as the Tupí-Guaraní people, but not as the Tehuelches of Patagonia]. Bartolomei seems to follow the school of thought declaring Vespucci’s giants as the Patagonians because he indicates in the character Albizi, described in the *America* as “d’Amerigo amico, anch’esso / degno alunno di Marte e di Bellona” (I, 82, 3-4), the hero that defeats the giant Lepomande (or Lepomonande) during the battle between Christians and Patagonians. In the *Lettera al Soderini* (1505), Vespucci indicated that the giants he met in Curaçao were bigger than Francesco degli Albizi, using this character as a parameter to indicate the height of the giants (Bonari, 2013: 144). The presence of both Vespucci and Albizi in the literary battlefield suggests a connection with Vespucci’s historical meeting with the giants, a meeting that Bartolomei transfers to Patagonia. However, rather than trying to recreate a historical event, it is possible that Bartolomei’s substitution of the Portuguese Magellan with the Florentines Vespucci and Albizi was more likely a celebration of the poet’s hometown Florence. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Bartolomei wished to portray Vespucci as an “Epic Hero” of regional identity, as Hester defined him, relegating the very Columbus to a secondary role, and downplaying the importance of Magellan’s discoveries. Laying claim to an important event in the history of travel such as the discovery of Patagonian giants would have widely increased the prominence of Florence, resulting in a self-promotion of the poet himself.<sup>32</sup> The Albizi family was one of the most

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<sup>32</sup> The same auto-celebrative scheme had already been adopted by Luís Vaz de Camões in *Os Lusíadas*, where the Portuguese poet celebrated his fellow Magellan precisely for having been the discoverer of the giants: “dês que passar a via mais que meia / que ao Antártico polo vai da Linha / duma estatura quási giganteia / homenes verá, da terra ali vizinha” [Rather more than half-way from equator to South Pole he will come on a land, Patagonia, where the inhabitants are of almost gigantic stature] (*Os Lusíadas*, 1572, X, 135, 1-4; English translation in Camões, 1952).



important in Florence, and the presence of a member of this family in the battle against Patagonians would have almost certainly attracted the goodwill of the Albizi household living at the time of Bartolomei. The decision of substituting Magellan with Vespucci was therefore a propagandistic and political choice, confirmed by the easy appropriation of the Portuguese and Spanish territories by the Florentines that we have already considered in the chapter dedicated to the American Amazons. The iconographical sources possibly used by Bartolomei in the description of the Patagonians episode confirm, as we will see, this nationalistic ideology.

It is possible that Bartolomei combined in his verses elements present in two engravings that represented Vespucci and Magellan respectively (the latter titled later *Inventio maris Magallanici*), drawn at the end of 1580s by Johannes Stradanus.<sup>33</sup> These engravings were part of the *Americae relectio* series that, as recently shown by the art historian Lia Markey (2012), was produced to highlight the role of Florence in the New World discoveries. Bartolomei seems to have described the ship depicted in Vespucci's engraving, surrounded by clear symbols of Florence such as the lily and the god Mars (fig. 68), and combined it with the description of the Patagonian environment derived from the *Inventio maris Magallanici* (fig. 44). The result is the portrait of the Florentine Vespucci called by Bartolomei "dignissimo Eroe della mia Patria" (1650: a1v), undertaking part of the incredible journey that was actually taken by Magellan.

There are various symbols of Patagonia in the Magellan engraving, such as the giant swallowing the usual arrow and the bonfires on the coast, but what indicates that Bartolomei could have referred to this specific engraving is the presence of the roc, a mythical bird of

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<sup>33</sup> For Bartolomei was probably quite easy to get a copy of Stradanus' engravings as they had a huge circulation all across Europe, mainly due to the reproductions published by Théodore de Bry in the *America pars quatre* (1594). See Keazor (1998).

Persian origin capable of carrying away elephants. In his account, Pigafetta described these huge birds “tanto grandi che portano un bufalo e uno elefante”, but he set them “sotto Giava Maggiore, verso la tramontana, nel golfo de la Cina, la quale li antichi chiamano Signo Magno” (1999: 56). According to Pigafetta, the roc lived close to Timor, and it is probable that Stradanus wanted to give a general idea of Magellan’s journey by not only introducing elements connected with Patagonia in his engraving, but also icons such as the roc that were able to evoke the entire circumnavigation of the world. In the caption that accompanies the engraving, one can read in fact: “Ferdinandes Magalanes Lusitanus anfractuoso euripo superato, & telluri ad Austrum nomen dedit, eiusque navis omnium prima atque novissima Solis cursum in terras aemulata, terrae totius globum circumiit” [Ferdinand Magellan of Portugal gave his name to the winding channel he’d conquered and the land to the south, and his ship, the first and last of all, emulating the Sun’s course over the lands, circled the globe of the whole earth] (Cañizares-Esguerra, 2006: 246).

The fact that Stradanus’ engraving is the only document that sets the roc in Patagonia indicates the *Inventio maris Magallanici* as one of the primary sources used by Bartolomei. In the poem, the roc attacks Vespucci and his men when they arrive in the Tierra del Fuego:

Scende il Grifagno rapido alle prede,  
 Come fulmin, che nube apre, e disserra  
 Ladro volante indi col furto riede  
 A trarne pasto fra romita Terra.  
 Qual fra l’aria portò sospeso al piede  
 L’Aquila il Lepre, che con l’unghie afferra,  
 Tal per lo Ciel quel Mostro remigante  
 Da gli artigli ghermito un Elefante  
 (*America*, XXV, 67)

Looking at the correspondence between the *Inventio maris Magallanici* and the *America*, we can also spot numerous similarities in the literary and artistic depiction of

Patagonia. First of all, the roc in the poem is described in the same way it is depicted in the engraving: it has black plumage (“negre penne vestia qual negro inchiostro”, XXV, 65, 6) and it comes from the *Terra Australis Incognita* (“natura l’esigliò fra quelle bande / estreme d’Austro, e nel confin del mondo” XXV, 66, 6-7). To these details we can list quite a few scenes where Bartolomei seems to create an ekphrasis of the engraving, describing it in the verses dedicated to Vespucci’s crossing of the Magellan strait. For example, in the speech made by Vespucci to his companions, the Florentine declares that he has discovered an isthmus connecting the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific, arriving at the conclusion that “il Mondo / giri immitando il Sol nel camin tondo” (XXV, 78, 7-8). This idea is well exemplified in the engraving by the presence of the god of the Sun Apollo, who seems to gently guide Magellan’s ship through the strait towards the Pacific Ocean. In another scene, Vespucci orders his men to repair the ship damaged by “procelle amare” (XXV, 80, 6): in the engraving a piece of the mast is placed on the deck of the ship, indicating the damage inflicted by the storms that battered Magellan and his crew during their journey. The cold, loud wind that “sprona il piloto alla partenza presta” (XXV, 84, 8) is personified in the engraving by the wind god Aeolus, who commands one of his winds to blow South-West to facilitate Magellan’s navigation. The direction taken by the ship is deducible from the orientation of the putto representing the wind, and from the position of the sails. The provisions for the journey and the “Cristiana insegna” (XXV, 85, 5) described in the poem appear in the *Inventio maris Magallanici*: the provisions are represented by the sealed barrel preserved on the ship, while the banner attached to the yard shows the coat of arms of Charles V, the king who financed Magellan’s expedition. Finally, the two nymphs appearing in the background in the engraving could have inspired the “Ninfee Napee” (XXV, 88, 3) met by Vespucci close to the coast. We can also add the physical depiction of the Patagonian giant that appears in the right side of the

engraving. This corresponds with the description in the poem of the terrible giant Stratachero; he holds the bow with his left hand (XXVII, 16, 6), has long hair (XXVII, 16, 8), is barefoot and with corns on his feet (XXVII, 22, 5; XXVII, 21, 6).

Ideally then, the depiction of the Patagonian giants in the *America* would have been inspired by the negative perception of the Patagonians encouraged by a vision of Stradanus' engraving. The traditional representation of the muscular armed giant pushing the arrow down his throat is accompanied in the *Inventio maris Magallanici* by numerous other negative elements that make Patagonia a land of fear, demeaning the representation of its inhabitants. The presence of sea monsters in the Magellan strait is a sign of the dangerousness of these territories, as suggested by scholars working on the representation of sea monsters in cartography such as Chet Van Duzer (2013a: 8) and Joseph Nigg (2013: "Invitation to a voyage"). The roc also appears to have a central role in the degrading perception of this engraving, as this huge and rapacious bird has a prominent position in the image. In order to understand the importance of the roc in the composition scheme, we should consider the emblematic representation of the half-woman, half-sea serpent triton holding her tail in the middle of the engraving. Whilst scholars such as Jorge Magasich-Airola, Jean-Marc de Beer (2006: 175), and Flavio Fiorani (2009: 51) referred to this figure by the general term 'mermaid', they did not, however, consider her serpentine nature or explain her allegorical meaning. The she-triton acquires a precise symbolic meaning when we compare her with the emblem of the triton surrounded by a serpent biting its tail in Andrea Alciati's *Book of Emblems* (Emblem 132, 1531) (fig. 69). Markey noticed the correspondence between the tritons in Stradanus's engraving of Columbus (fig. 70) and the triton in Alciati's work. However, as the tritons in the engraving are not surrounded by serpents, it is possible that they could have easily been inspired by the numerous ichthyocentaurs (hybrid combination of

human, horse and fish) appearing on Medieval and Renaissance maps (fig. 71). In Stradanus' engraving of Magellan, the she-triton holding her tail is instead a precise reference to the sea-serpent biting its tail in the emblem. As indicated by Alciati, the snake represents literary fame showing that "ex literarum studiis immortalitatem acquiri" [immortality is attained through the study of letters].<sup>34</sup> Rather than indicating the route followed by Magellan as suggested by Markey, my belief is that the she-triton is pointing towards the roc, attributing literary fame to it instead of Magellan. This is shown by the bird capturing the attention of the two nymphs in the background, and the savages running to the shore to look at it. In the 1930s, the art historian Rudolf Wittkower demonstrated that this huge and rapacious bird was already present in Sanskrit epics of the Fourth Century BC (1938: 255). Numerous are the authors who quoted the roc in their works, such as Mandeville, Fra Mauro, Marco Polo and Pigafetta himself, to name but a few. The popularity of this animal in historical and literary books indicates that the roc could have indeed been the object of the literary fame pointed out by the she-triton. As such, it is possible that Stradanus was attempting to reduce the importance of Magellan's feat, by dedicating more attention to the roc. Flying directly towards the Patagonian giant, the huge bird could be interpreted in the engraving as a pet animal delivering a gift (the elephant) to his master the giant. This makes the giant appear even more frightful, and contributes to the invention of Patagonian giants as negative characters.

Finally, the bonfires on the shore used by the indigenous people to warm themselves are transformed into self-made fires that extend across the entire territory in the engraving, a

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<sup>34</sup> "Neptuni tubicen (cuius pars ultima cetum, / Aequoreum facies indicat esse Deum) / Serpentis medio Triton comprehenditur orbe, / Qui caudam inserto mordicus ore tenet. / Fama viros animo insignes, praeclaraque gesta / Prosequitur, toto mandat et orbe legi" [Triton, the trumpeter of Neptune (whose lower part shows he is a sea-monster, whose face shows him to be a god), is enclosed in the middle of a circle of a snake, who seizes his tail in his mouth with his teeth. Fame pursues men worthy in spirit and their splendid deeds, and commands that they be read by all the world] (English translation in Somos, 2011: 162).

visual oxymoron that creates confusion in the viewer. The presence of fire that Europeans believed to be self-generated in a cold land such as Patagonia<sup>35</sup> suggests the monstrous nature of the population living in such an unnatural environment, making gigantism a diabolic anomaly. According to Surekha Davies, the iconography of Patagonia suggests that “the extreme climate of Patagonia (and other habitats of monstrous peoples) encouraged physical and mental deformities, and that European colonists and their descendants might suffer the same fate”.<sup>36</sup> It is possible that in Stradanus’ engraving the cohesion of warm and cold in the generative land of Patagonians strengthen Davies’ argument, contributing to a degenerative vision of the giant in the image.

In conclusion, Bartolomei’s use of the *Americae relectio* series enables us to link the description of the terrible Patagonians in the poem to the negative interpretation of Patagonia that is deduced from a close visual analysis of the engravings. The *Inventio maris Magallanici* predominately used by Bartolomei makes the figure of Vespucci stand out, in accordance with Markey’s definition of Magellan as being “less active and less engaged in his journey than the other two Italian navigators in the series” (2012: 431). The Portuguese Magellan is in fact more focused on the armillary sphere, symbol of Portugal since the reign of Manuel I (1495-1521), than on the *mirabilia* that surround him. The entire engraving of Magellan is influenced by Stradanus’ need to highlight the role of Florence in the discovery of America thereby reducing Magellan to a background role. As such, the engraving presents the same nationalistic propaganda recognisable in Bartolomei’s poem, suggesting a close connection between the two works that found its acme in the representation of the cruel Patagonian giant.

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<sup>35</sup> See p. 113.

<sup>36</sup> Davies, S., *Wonder, ethnography and markers of monstrosity: European responses to New World peoples, 1520-1620*, paper presented at the 2013 RSA Annual Meeting, San Diego. Quoted from the abstract.

## Graziani and the hybrid Succarath

The last poem that will be analysed in the investigation of the poetic debt to cartography in the depiction of Patagonian giants is Girolamo Graziani's *Conquisto di Granata* (1650). In canto XXII, the character of Columbus reports the long journey to the New World with his crew to Christian knights, describing in detail the attack of the marine monsters, the meeting with the savages, and the amenity of the new land. Having left the control of Hispaniola to Diego d'Arana, Columbus recounts how having set sail for Spain in order to report the news of the geographical discoveries to King Ferdinand of Aragon, his ship was blown off course by a storm. They arrived in the vicinity of an island, where the ship got stuck in the shallows and needed to be refloated in order to continue. Columbus sent Florimano and two other members of the crew on a boat to tow the ship from the shallows, but the three men instead took the occasion to escape to the nearby island. Columbus remained in the bay for two days unable to put to sea due to unfavourable wind, and on the third day saw Florimano pleading for help whilst being chased by a multitude of cynocephali giants:

Venia correndo in su la trita arena  
Fiero stuolo, che d'urli empieva il lito:  
Avea la turba orribile e ferina  
Statura gigantea, faccia canina.  
(*Il Conquisto di Granata*, XXII, 78, 5-8)

Florimano was saved by Columbus; this provoked the angry outburst of the horrible giant Corsicurbo, who threw a rock against the Christian ship trying to sink it. Once the ship is able to get away from the "spiaggia horribile, e infedele" (*C. d G.*, XXII, 85, 4), Florimano tells Columbus how he and his two companions were captured by the giants and brought to Corsicurbo's cave, where the two companions were killed and eaten. The scene in

Corsicurbo's cave has been defined by Piero Di Nepi as the triumph of the horrifying baroque age, as the image of the human flesh eaten by the giants is described with vivid realism (1976: 103). As with Stigliani, the episode has its literary model in the *Odyssey*, recalling the meeting of Ulysses with Polyphemus. However, contrary to previous literary and historiographical sources, the giants described by Graziani are dog-headed giants, a particular detail that can be connected with the cartographical sources used by the poet in the delineation of the epic geography of his poem.

At a first reading we can easily suppose that the island of giants is based somewhere in the Caribbean, as Graziani does not specify that the giants attacking Florimano are Patagonians. The first part of Columbus's journey in the poem follows the historiographical sources: Columbus and his crew arrive in Hispaniola from Palos, after a break in the Canary Islands. The island could therefore be identified as Curaçao, where as reported in the *Mondus novus*, Amerigo Vespucci met the giants (Bonari, 2013: 194). However, in Vespucci's account the giants are not cynocephali, and Columbus himself reported in his *Journal* that the Indian stories that spoke of a population of cynocephali in the Caribbean had to be considered untrue: “y deziã que no tenian sino un ojo y la cara de perro: y cre ya el almi<sup>e</sup> que mentian: y sentia el almi<sup>e</sup> que deviã de ser dl señorío del gran Can que los captiva” [“They say that they have but one eye and the face of a dog; and the Admiral thought they were lying and felt that those who captured them must have been under the rule of the Grand Khan”] (1989: 176-177).

To understand the location of this island we should instead consider the itinerary followed by Columbus's ship on the route towards Spain. After leaving Hispaniola, the ship is blown off course by a “vento infido / che soffia da sinistra”, meaning that the ship was pushed south by the storm wind where at the middle of the Seventeenth Century the land of giants



was officially located. In order to return to Europe from this Southern land, the Christians need to coast a large portion of Western Africa, indicating that the storm took them very far away from Hispaniola, hypothetically to Patagonia. Some elements in the text lead the reader to believe that the giants described by Graziani could have been indeed Patagonians. Firstly, Graziani often pointed out that the giants shouted beastly sounds “al cui romor quasi leon disciolto” (*CdG*, XXII, 81, 3). For instance, when Corsicurbo realises that Florimano was running away, he is so angry that “con un rauco latrato il ciel percote” (*CdG*, XXII, 82, 4). This detail of giants having a grave and animal-like voice is present in Pigafetta’s description of Patagonians, where the writer frequently pointed out that giants had “una voce molto grossa” (Ramusio, II, 877). Secondly, the dog-headed giants appear to be an obvious reference to the Tehuelche people masked as dogs, because this particular element was widely known at Graziani’s time, thanks to Cavendish’s direct evidence reported in his account.

In order to investigate how Graziani was influenced by cartographical representation of Patagonian giants, we should consider the maps used by the poet to trace the route of Columbus’s ship. The most detailed part of the journey describes the African coasts that we can derive from the *Africae nova tabula*, originally engraved by Jodocus Hondius in 1618 and copied by numerous cartographers such as Joannes Janssonius and Joan Blaeu (fig. 72). Starting from the bottom and going up to Spain, we can recognise all the places listed in the poem with the same toponyms and details used by Hondius: the “fiume Nero” that “appare / diviso in cinque foci” (*CdG*, XXIII, 3, 2) is the *Niger fluvius* (‘Niger’ is ‘black’ in Latin) with its five mouths clearly marked on the map; the “duo promontori esposti in mare, / verde ha l’ultimo il crin, rosso il primiero” (*CdG*, XXIII, 3, 5-6) are the Cabo Verde and Cabo Roxo promontories in modern Gambia and Senegal; the Hesperides islands “in cui visse Medusa, e fu reina” (*CdG*, XXIII, 3, 8) and whom habitants still remember “che quivi il nido / aveva già

l'orribile Gorgone" (*CdG*, XXIII, 4, 4) are labelled as *Hesperides sive Gorgades*; "l'ampie città che il glorioso Annone / edificò sovra la spiaggia aprica" (*CdG*, XXIII, 4, 6-7) in the Atlantic coast of Morocco are signposted in the map, as well as the "Cancro celeste" (*CdG*, XXIII, 5, 3) that is the Tropic of Cancer, and the "Canarie [...] Fortunate" (*CdG*, XXIII, 5, 4-7) labelled as *I. Canariae olim Fortunatae* (fig. 73).

Hondius' *Africae* was part of a series of world maps that also included the Americas, Europe and Asia collected in the *Theatrum orbis terrarum, sive atlas novus* published in 1635 by Willem Blaeu and his son Joan Blaeu. It is likely that Graziani might have used this atlas, as studying the epic geography of the poem we can recognise an intertwining use of the maps that it contains. The Moroccan coast described in the poem as "tingitane arene / fertili d'elefanti e di leoni" (*CdG*, XXIII, 6, 1-2) is actually engraved with elephants and lions in the maps of Europe contained in the atlas (fig. 74), while the enlarged map of Andalusia seems to have been followed step by step by the poet in the section describing the Christian army marching from Gade (Cadiz) to Granada. The patriarchal and pagan crosses towering over Granada on the map (fig. 75) are a clear reference to the Muslim and Catholic conflict that subverted the town in 1492, amply described by Graziani in his poem. We should also consider that Graziani, who for a long time was State Secretary at the Este court, wrote the *Conquisto di Granata* during the years he spent in Modena, having access to the rich Este map collection. A copy of Blaeu's atlas that Graziani might have consulted is still preserved today in the Biblioteca Estense in Modena.<sup>37</sup>

Having identified the possible geographical source of Graziani's poem, we can now look at the representation of Patagonians in the *America noviter delineate* map in Blaeu's

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<sup>37</sup> Blaeu, W. J. (1650), *Theatrum orbis terrarum, sive novus atlas*, Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, A 5602.

atlas. A giant is represented here together with a quadruped that the Patagonian teratology expert Austin Whittall identified as a Succarath (or Sú) (fig. 76)<sup>38</sup>. This monster was depicted for the first time in André Thevet's anthropological account of South America, probably by Jean Cousin the Younger (1558: 108-109) (fig. 77), and later included in Ambroise Paré's *Des Animaux et de l'excellence de l'homme* (1585: 43d) and Theodore de Bry's *Les Grands voyages* (1630, XIV: 55). In 1635 the Spanish Jesuit Juan Eusebio Nieremberg described the Succarath as a "belluam rapacem [...] torva" [wild rapacious beast] producing "horribili clamore" [horrible calls] and living in Patagonia amongst the giants (1635, IX, 74: 189). As reported by Victoria Dickenson, it was considered a "cruel, untameable, violent, ravening, and bloody" beast, gaining a reputation for its fierceness (1998: 37). Although the scholars have identified Succaraths as ground sloths (Heuvelmans, 1958: 281), bearded sakis (García Mahiques, 1988: 186) and anteaters (Dickenson, 1998: 37), in Blaeu's map the Succarath appears very similar to a dog: the pointy ears in the pseudo-Cousin engraving are replaced with hanging ears, and the human-like face is changed to a bloodhound-like one. What remains of the Succarath engraved by pseudo-Cousin is only the characteristic long tail, similar to a feather, used to protect the puppies carried on the back.<sup>39</sup>

The proximity on the map of the Patagonian giant and the dog-headed Succarath could communicate the idea of violence and brutality that Graziani attributes to his giants. The poet creates monstrous hybrids, combining the excessive size of the giants and the canine and aggressive aspect of the Succarath, producing a new race of American giants that do not have any predecessors in the literary and historiographical field. In general, the dog-heads are a

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<sup>38</sup> <http://patagoniamonsters.blogspot.co.uk/2009/11/ancient-map-depicting-succarath.html>

<sup>39</sup> In the maps of the Americas depicted by other cartographers of the period such as Joannes Janssonius, Petrus Bertius and Jean Boisseau the quadruped depicted close to the Patagonians lose the characteristic tail of the Succarath, entirely appearing as a dog.

reference to the cannibalistic practise cynocephali were often accused of, a practice famous in South America particularly among the Brazilian Tupí. The trend of depicting American cannibals as cynocephali was already present in the first half of the Sixteenth Century, when the mapmaker Lorenz Fries, in his *Uselegung der Mercarthen oder Carta Marina* [Guide and Instructions for the Carta Marina] (1525), asked an anonymous engraver to depict a butcher shop, where cynocephali cut, salted, dried and ate different parts of the human body (fig. 78).<sup>40</sup> The depiction of a cannibal cynocephalus is also included by Giovanni Botero in his *Aggiunta alla quarta parte delle Indie* (fig. 79), accompanied by a detailed description setting the monster in South America: “nella Provincia die Santa Croce si sono ritrovati mostri con la testa canina, e in vea di favellare hanno un certo suono, o genito appunto latrato da cane, la braccia simili a quelle de gl’huomini, [...] vivono di rapnia mangiono carne humana, come quelli del Brasil” (1623: A3r). Graziani, however, combined the cannibalistic trait evident in the dog-heads of his monsters with gigantism, exacerbating the cruelty and the monstrosity of his characters.

The presence of a dog-headed Succarath located close to a Patagonian giant on a map that Graziani likely consulted when he was writing his poem gives us reason to believe that, once again, the iconographic resources could have had a major role in the poetic description of Patagonians. The symbolic meaning of violence and cruelty attributed to the Succarath is extended to the hybrid combination of Succarath and giants created by the poet, and the

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<sup>40</sup> Fries pointed out that the cannibals were on “ein Insul innen welche Christoffel Dauber von Janua bey kurtzen jaren erfunden hat” [an island, which Christopher Columbus of Genoa discovered some years ago] (Fries, 1527: C2r, quoted by Colin, 1987: 19) setting the scene in the Caribbean. However, in the engraving a guanaco is depicted, a camelid similar to the llama that only lives in the southernmost regions of South America. This extraneous element, as the roc in Stradanus’s engraving, easily allowed the viewer to move the setting of the representation to South America.

benevolent giants of the historical tradition are transformed into horrible creatures with aberrant values.<sup>41</sup>

### **Visualising the Patagonians**

The evolution in the representation of Patagonian giants in cartography has influenced the description of the giants in poetry, turning them into increasingly cruel and ferocious monsters. This correspondence allowed us to establish the use made by poets of visual sources in the construction of the New World, bringing a contribution to the existing scholarship that focus for the most on written accounts. The process of masculinising the giants, turning Ariosto's prudent Caligorante into Graziani's appalling Corsicurbo is the result of a changed perception of the New World *mirabilia* in the cartographic resources that was translated into poetry. This finds its correspondence in the changed aesthetic tastes, as the Renaissance cedes to the Baroque period. In the Seventeenth Century, maps are more accurate in the representation of the newly discovered lands, giving the viewer an illusion of cartographic objectivity that is visually convincing. The New World myths represented in baroque maps are as a result more familiar than in the previous century, with scenes of local life carefully detailed; such as the drunken giants trying to get over the binge, and the domesticated dog-succarath living in the giants' land. Mapmakers communicated through the representation of the giants the frustration and the violence of their own time, giving credence to the idea that the New World was inhabited by horrible monsters with physical and moral deformities. The passage from Renaissance to Baroque maps has not so far been the subject of

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<sup>41</sup> The negativity of the animal is still on even if we consider the Succarath to be a dog. In her book *Animals as Disguised Symbols in Renaissance Art*, Simona Cohen claims, in fact, that in the Renaissance period dogs were associated with *Invidia* and *Ira* because "envious and angry men are like 'hounds that bark and bite'" (2008: 213).

an accurate study. The only contribution to this area has been a PhD thesis written in 1998 by Bernard V. Heise on the cartography in Baroque age, where the author analysed the nature of the baroque map as a perspectival image able to reflect the composition of the baroque society. However, the theme was not expanded, and the study of cartography in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries remained catalogued under a more general “early modern period” category that does not trace the passage into the new Baroque era. Studying the evolution of the myth of Patagonian giants in poems that are strictly connected to the maps, we can spot the transition from one period to the other, indicating a need in the field of cartographical studies to deal with such a change.

The data acquired by a cultural reading of the maps conferred to the literary Patagonian giants the same hubristic and macho features that characterised the entire baroque period. Visual arts were the cradle of the new baroque taste of masculine sensibility. According to scholars such as Anna Coliva, Sebastian Schutze (1998) and Emilio Russo (2012), the first to introduce the concept of baroque machismo was Gian Lorenzo Bernini in his sculptures made at Scipione Borghese’s abode. The best example was probably Bernini’s David (1623-24), characterised by a new energy and virility unknown in the previous century. As suggested by the art historian Ann Sutherland Harris, “Spectators standing in front [of the David] may well feel that they should duck to avoid getting hit”, and the energy issued by the statue is so intense that one would never put himself in Goliath’s shoes (2008: 90). The same energy and virulence visible in baroque sculptures and paintings is also visible in the cartouches and in the ornamental details on baroque maps and engravings, so that the evolution of the myth of Patagonians can be considered an excellent example of the new baroque taste taking place at the beginning of the Seventeenth Century. In the same way that the joyful cynocephalus giant in Piri Reis’ map is replaced by the unsettling arrow-swallowing giant in Stradanus’s

engraving; Zambardo, Caligorante and the comic giants of the literary tradition were replaced by horrible giants as Lepomande, Stratachero and Corsicurbo that are clear emblems of violence and fear.

The study of the Patagonian giants allows us to claim that visual culture was also an inspiration for epic poets, and that Patagonian giants were domesticated and exploited for the poets own purposes. Interpreting the literary Patagonians as ekphrasis of their visual counterparts, the readers are able to consider political and social aspects of the poems that were not immediately pinpointing, such as the critique of Stigliani against the ecclesiastical system. Reading the poems considering the visual impact of the sources poets referred is fundamental for an understanding of the works, and in the next chapter we will see how also material culture played an important role in the epic visualisation of the New World.

**Chapter four**

**CANADIAN PYGMIES FROM THE CABINET OF CURIOSITY TO  
EPIC POETRY**

As with the myth of the Caribbean and Brazilian Amazons and the Patagonian giants, the myth of Canadian pygmies was introduced in the poems of the Columbian corpus that have been analysed so far. In Stigliani's *Mondo nuovo*, Maramonte met them during the journey to North America to capture Rodrigo de Triana (*MN*, XVII, 154-161). While in Bartolomei's *America*, the pygmies were discovered by Vespucci on the Grulanda Island (*America*, XVI, 70-88). In this chapter I have decided, however, to focus on two poems extraneous to the Columbian corpus that have apparently nothing to do with the New World theme: Michelangelo Serafini's *Nanea* and Agnolo Bronzino's *Piato*. My intention is to show that New World myths were not only explicitly used in poetry dedicated to the new discoveries, but also incorporated in a vaster production. The myth of pygmies was based in America after the journey of Jacques Cartier to Canada, and my aim is to investigate how these mythological creatures were used in the poetic production of mid-Sixteenth-Century Medicean Florence. I claim that the myth of New World pygmies offers a tool to assess the relationship between poetry, materiality and society at the Medici court; calling into question the legacy of Cosimo I de' Medici as *de facto* ruler of Florence. A close reading of the poems reveals that the Medici court is presented as a counterpart of the New World; and the Canadian pygmies can be assimilated into the Florentine discourse. Having already considered the written and cartographical sources used by poets in the previous chapters, the



myth of the pygmies allows us to consider the role of collectible objects in the poetic invention of the Americas.

In the first section I will give an overview of the myth of the Canadian pygmies in order to show how Cartier's discovery injected a new element of wonder into a familiar curiosity: the overseas origin of the pygmies added in fact an exotic taste to the already interesting appearance of the court dwarves. In the second section I shall clarify how this myth was perceived in mid-Sixteenth-Century Florence. The presence of items connected to this myth in Cosimo's collection in the Palazzo Vecchio is our starting point to investigate why the poets studied in this chapter compared Cosimo and his fellows Arameans to New World pygmies in their works. In the third section I will investigate the role of pygmies in the *Nanea*, highlighting the presence of New World scenarios in the poem and their use in Medici propaganda. I shall also analyse the way in which the pygmies described in the poems can be defined as 'Americans', and how their exotic origin modifies our interpretation of the poem. The fourth section is dedicated to Bronzino's *Piato* and I will show how the myth of Canadian pygmies becomes an instrument of puns and satire in this poem. The New World appears as a sick world, homeland of sodomy, cannibalism and syphilis, and Bronzino compares it with the degenerative reality of the Medici court created by Cosimo. The negative perception that Bronzino gives of the New World helps us to better understand his position in the Accademia Fiorentina and his relationship with his patrons. The last section is dedicated to the depiction of the court dwarf Morgante by Bronzino. This painting incorporates the same motifs and tropes of the *Nanea* and *Piato*, and it could represent in one single item Cosimo's entire microcosm.

## **Lilliput ante litteram**

Et aussi qu'il estoit bien deslibéré de mener le dict seigneur Donnacona en France, pour compter et dire au Roy ce qu'il avoyt veu es pays occidentaulx des merveilles du monde; car il nous a certiffié avoyr esté à la terre de Saguenay, où il y a infiny or, rubiz et aultres richesses, et y sont les hommes blancs, comme en France, et acoustrez de draps de laine. [...] Plus, dict avoyr esté en aultre pays de Picquenyans, et aultre pays où les gens n'ont que une jambe, et aultres merveilles, longues à racompter.

And moreover he had quite made up his mind to take Chief Donnacona to France, that he might relate and tell to the king all he had seen in the west of the wonders of the word; for he assured us that he had been to the land of the Saguenay where there are immense quantities of gold, rubies and other rich things, and that the men there are white as in France and go clothed in woollens. [...] He told us furthermore that he had been in the land of the Picquenyans, and to another country whose inhabitants have only one leg, and other marvels too long to relate (Biggar, 1924: 221-222).

In 1535, the French explorer Jacques Cartier was sent to North America for the second time by King Francis I, in order to discover a Northwest passage to Asia. The search for this route took him and his crew along the St. Lawrence River where, in the town of Stradacona (present-day Québec City), they encountered 'king' Donnacona, chief of the Iroquian tribe. Amongst the indigenous people inhabiting the lands close to Stradacona, Donnacona referred to a population of 'Picquenyans' he met in person. There is no reference in the text as to what made this people a 'marvel', with neither a description of them from a physical nor characterial point of view. The fact remains, however, that accounts of the region following Cartier's equated these Picquenyans with pygmies and gave rise to literary, cartographical and visual representations of a pygmy population located close to the St Lawrence River in Canada. There are two main schools of thought as to how the Picquenyans-Pygmies connection happened. Some scholars suggest that Cartier used the word 'Picquenyans' intending to denote 'pygmies' due to the phonic similarity of the words (Van Duzer, 2012: 425; Gagnon and Petel, 1986: 108); the second school of thought is that Donnacona himself

pronounced this word following the suggestion of the Europeans, who were trying to connect the extraneous ‘picquenyans’ to a familiar context (Rigolot, 1956: 173). These however are mere hypotheses, as these same scholars confirm, and we do not have any evidence that either Cartier or Donnacona had a role in the picqueny-an-pygmy association. ‘Picquenyans’ could have easily been the name of one of the numerous tribes living along the course of the St. Lawrence River, or a legendary population part of the Iroquian mythology, unrelated to the pygmies. As such, the origin of the Picquenyans-Pygmies association remains, then, not clarified; but it became soon evident in the cartographical representation of Canada. Cartier’s account was first published in 1545,<sup>1</sup> and the following year Desceliers indicated the presence of a population of ‘pimions’ along the St Lawrence River in his “Dauphin map” (fig. 80 and 81). By the time of Desceliers’ 1550 planisphere, Cartier’s ‘picquenyans’ were officially transformed into Canadian pygmies, shown fighting against cranes, and accompanied by the following inscription:

Cy dessus est la demonstration d’ung / peuple nommé pigmeous gens de petite / stature  
comme d’une couldee au troysiesme / an ilz engendrent et au 8<sup>e</sup> ilz meurent / non ayans  
devant les yeulx honte justice / ou honnesteté, pour cause sont / dictz brutes, non  
hommes. On tient / qu’ilz ont guerre continuelle contre / les oyseaulx nommés grues.  
(Bahuchet, 1993: 160n.)

[Above is the representation of a people called pygmies, people of small stature and similarly small ideas. At the age of three they procreate, at eight years they die without having before their eyes shame, justice or honesty. For this reason they are called brutes, not men. It is said that they are constantly at war with the birds called cranes] (English translation in Oswalt, 1999: 166) (fig. 82).

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<sup>1</sup> Cartier, J. (1545), *Brief Recit, & succincte narration, de la navigation faicte es ysles de Canada, Hochelage & Saguenay & autres, avec particulares meurs, langaige, & cerimonies des habitans d’icelles: fort delectable à veoir*, Paris: Roffet dict Faucheur & Anthoine le Clerc frères. The only surviving exemplar is preserved at the British Library, G.7082. See Cartier (1953). Ramusio included Cartier’s account in the third volume of his *Navigazioni et viaggi* (1556); and later Richard Hakluyt commissioned the linguist John Florio to translate the work to English making it available to a wider audience (London, 1580).

Cartier's 'picquenyans' were transformed into modern incarnations of the classical pygmies, who fought against cranes in a number of ancient works. Geranomachy, the battle between pygmies and cranes, was first introduced in the *Iliad*. Homer compared the first bloody battle between the Greek and the Trojan armies to the conflict between the pygmies and the cranes:

When the armies were ready, each company with its leader,  
the Trojans advanced with a raucous shouting, like cranes  
whose shrieks fill the sky as they flee from the storms of winter  
and the endless rain, and fly toward the river Ocean,  
bringing swift death through the air to the Pygmy troops (*Iliad*, III, 1-5).

After the *Iliad*, the geranomachy was developed by numerous writers and historians, becoming one of the most successful and developed classical myths. There is a vast bibliography on this topic, with scholars reporting the different sources in chronological order, and identifying the different aspects of the legend.<sup>2</sup> Aelian and Ovid, for example, derived the geranomachy from the ancient myth of the Queen of Pygmies, Gerana, turned into a crane by Hera/Juno for having asserted to be better looking than her (Aelian, *On Animals*, XV, 29; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VI, 90); while Pliny the Elder added the notion that pygmies used to ride she-goats during battle, and built their huts with cranes eggshells (*Natural History*, VII, 23-30). Imagination played a huge role in the development of these stories, and each writer added details about pygmies' size and customs. Their location has always been a huge point of discussion: Herodotus located pygmies in Libya (*Histories*, II, 36-37), Aristotle at the sources of the Nile (*Historia animalium*, VIII, XII, 597a), Pomponius Mela in Ethiopia (*De chronographia*, 3, 8, 81), and Basilis in India (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, 9.390b). The connection between the different places indicated by these authors is that they were all part of

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<sup>2</sup> See in particular Janni (1979); Sparkes (2000); Eberhart (2002), Cracco Ruggini (2003); Roling (2010).

the far-off world, located at the edge of the earth. With the new geographical discoveries those limits were extended, and pygmies like the Amazons and the giants found their place in the ‘new’ far-off world. The presence of pygmies in the Far North was already seen in Olaus Magnus’s *Carta Marina* first published in 1539, where a pygmy was represented in Greenland next to a Norseman in order to emphasize his small stature (Seaver, 2008; fig. 83). The interpretation of Cartier’s report moved this scene from Greenland to Canada, introducing pygmies into the New World (fig. 84).<sup>3</sup> This was probably as a result of the identification of pygmies with Inuit people, given the characteristic small size of members of this population (Saladin D’Anglure and Morin, 1996). As noticed by Bernard Saladin D’Anglure (1992), the presence in North America of great blue herons similar to cranes, as well as the similarity in shape between Inuit igloos, and cranes eggshells used by pygmies to build the roof of their abodes, could have encouraged the first explorers to locate pygmies in the New World.

The news of the presence of a population of pygmies in North America was explicitly adopted by epic poets in the Seventeenth Century. In both Stigliani’s *Mondo nuovo* and Bartolomei’s *America* North American pygmies appear, and they were identified with the dwarves who used to live in the early modern European courts as *buffoni*, counsellors and valets. Dwarves were already considered wonders of nature for their unusual physiognomies, and the American provenience of these pygmies contributed to increase their level of marvelousness. The correspondence between New World pygmies and court dwarves was visually indicated in Desceliers’ 1550 world map, where the pygmies depicted in Canada hold a banner representing the jester’s hat typical of court dwarves (fig. 82). Stigliani and Bartolomei used this dwarves-pygmies identification to provide their poems with a new level

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<sup>3</sup> The localization of pygmies in North America is also cartographically attested in Caspar Vopel’s 1558 world map, and in Tommaso Porcacchi’s map of “Santa Croce, overo Mondo Nuovo” (1572: 161), where the ‘pignemai’ are labelled close to Labrador (Burden, 1996: 55).

of wonder. In Stigliani's poem, the Christians meet the pygmies during their journey looking for the traitor Rodrigo de Triana, who had stolen the Indian gold destined for the Spanish king (*MN*, XVII, 154-161). As no human beings were seen on the shore, Columbus sent some helmsmen, the interpreter Sandro and the valiant knight Maramonte to the hinterland, looking for people and water. After walking for a mile, the Christians found themselves in the middle of a traditional battle between pygmies and cranes: in the winter the cranes used to eat the dwarves' harvest, while during the summer the dwarves used to destroy the cranes' eggs to halt their reproduction. The result is a terrible fight happening twice a year, where numerous cranes and dwarves are killed. Maramonte decided to fight with the pygmies because "l'amor della sua spezie il mosse" (XVII, 158, 4), an expression that clarifies the nature of the epic pygmies as human beings, and not as animals as many believed at the time (García Aguilar, 2003: 746). The identification of the pygmies with court dwarves is evincible from the sensation that they provoked in the Europeans, that is of "pietade, e riso" (XVII, 159, 4). This is the dichotomical position to which court dwarves were relegated: fool of nature on one side, creatures to protect on the other. During the early modern period, dwarves were in fact appreciated in the European court as jesters, collectible curiosities and advisors; usually mocked for their grotesque nature, but also respected and linked to the royal families by a strong friendship.<sup>4</sup> Blaise de Vigenère reported, for example, that in 1556 Cardinal Vitelli hired thirty-four dwarves to serve a special dinner: "nous fûmes tous servis par des *Nains*, jusqu'au nombre de trente-quatre, de fort petite stature, mais le plupart contrefaits et difformes" (Martin, 2002: 259; Canel, 2010: 59); and Lucrezia Borgia used to serve (living) dwarves up with fruit at the end of banquets to delight her guests (Tuan, 1984: 155).

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<sup>4</sup> There is a vast bibliography on the Renaissance role of court dwarves. On the perception of dwarves as collectible curiosities see in particular Ghadessi (2011). On their role of cultural brokers Kubersky-Piredda & Salort Pons (2011). On their identification with jesters Zapperi (1995). Other relevant titles are quoted in the chapter.

However, the possession of dwarves was also considered a high status symbol, and dwarves were sent away on loan from one court to another as sign of gratitude and respect. Receiving a dwarf as a gift was perceived as a great honour: Alfonso d'Este was delighted with the dwarf Metello that his sister Isabella sent to him (Adelson, 2005: 11), and Charles IX was enthusiastic with the dwarves he received as a present from Germany and Poland (Thompson, 1930: 188). This dichotomy was adopted by Stigliani who explicitly referred to the pygmies as funny creatures that needed to be protected, just like the court dwarves. As such, the poet added to the already marvellous dwarves a marvel surplus to their exotic origin. Six American pygmies were in fact taken by Columbus on his ship (XVII, 161), possibly as a present for the Spanish sovereigns.

The same description of the American pygmies as court dwarves is also present in Girolamo Bartolomei's *America*. Here Vespucci and his crew come across "una tal Gente Nana, / che pareva scherzo, e gioco di Natura" (XVI, 73, 3-4), defining pygmies at the same time as something to mock and to take delight in. When they met the pygmies for the first time, laughter was the immediate reaction to such strange people: "In risa prorompemmo, mentre Genti / sì prodigiose a Noi si fer presenti" (XVI, 78, 7-8). However, as in Stigliani's case, they decided to help them against the cranes, reproducing the role of patrons in European courts: making fun of, and protecting dwarves.

The use of Canadian pygmies in poetry and their identification with the court dwarves is, however, not a peculiarity of the Seventeenth Century. New World pygmies can be already recorded in the poetical and artistic production of the middle Sixteenth Century, where they are described as collectible objects in the cabinet of curiosities. The collectability of the dwarves and the passion of collectors for the exotic *mirabilia* imported from the Americas were in fact combined in the figure of these marvellous dwarves living in the newly

discovered lands. One of the best examples of this trend is the particular role played by Canadian pygmies at the court of Cosimo I de' Medici, where they were used by poets and artists to describe the political situation of the Florentine dukedom. As the Canadian pygmies are identified with the Medici court dwarves, Cosimo's dukedom is compared to the New World, and this gives us important information about the Florentine perception of the New World, and the Medici political agenda.

### **Canadian pygmies at the court of Cosimo I de' Medici**

Cosimo I de' Medici was a devoted collector of exotic artefacts. His *Kunstammer*, the cabinet of curiosities in the Palazzo Vecchio that included the artefacts imported from the Americas, was one of the richest in the Sixteenth Century in terms of material collected. Its importance has been amply studied by scholars such as Detlef Heikamp (1972), Adriana Turpin (2006) and Andrea M. Gáldy (2009). Between the items listed in what can be recognised as the West Indies sections of the inventories,<sup>5</sup> several cranes' eggshells appear, as well a little statue of colonial origin representing pygmies riding ostriches/cranes (Bock, 2005: 45; Turpin, 2006: 81-82).<sup>6</sup> It is not possible to identify with precision when such items were introduced into the collection, because of the incompleteness and imprecision of the inventories that were compiled only occasionally (Heikamp, 1972: 10). It is possible however, to suppose that they were acquired during Cosimo's regency as crane and ostrich eggshells

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<sup>5</sup> The presence of typical New World items such as feather works and turquoise masks allows us to identify the West Indies sections in the inventories. The first Medici inventory showing American items was compiled in 1539 as per Heikamp (1972: 34).

<sup>6</sup> Cranes and ostriches were commonly confused as indicated in Camille (1999: 367). For example, in Federico da Montefeltro's *studiolo* they are depicted as the same animal (Raggio, 1999: 148). Numerous scholars also debated wherever the birds involved in the battle against pygmies were in fact ostriches, as shown by Adelson (2005: 122).



were popular in the European collections as early as the beginning of the Sixteenth Century (Bock, 2005: 8).<sup>7</sup> The statue was described in the inventory as “doro smaltata con piu diamante e rubina esmerato atorno” (Turpin, 2006: 81). This material, like the coconut cup in the Humboldt collection that we have discussed in the first chapter, could indicate the setting of the sculpted pygmies and cranes in the New World. Gemstones like the diamonds, emeralds and rubies surrounding the statue were in fact imported to Florence from the Americas (usually via Spain) in huge quantities, as explained by Anna Maria Massinelli and Filippo M. Tuena (1992). How can this statue representing the geranomachy preserved amongst the American items of Cosimo’s collection influence our reading of the poems and paintings produced in the Cosimo’s entourage? The statue, as well as the crane eggshells and other objects in the Medici *Kunstammer*, is fundamental to understanding what Cosimo considered interesting in terms of wonder. The items in the collection were in fact supposed to acquire a new cultural meaning, mirroring the duke’s ideology and propaganda. They represented the microcosm of Cosimo’s princely dominion, communicating the power of the duke through the possession not only of fascinating items, but also through the knowledge that these exotic artefacts implied. As suggested by Arthur MacGregor, “the attraction of such an installation to the ruling classes was given additional piquancy by the analogy it offered between the macrocosm over which the princely owner might hold sway and the microcosm of the collection which he shaped and directed with equal authority” (2007: 56). New World artefacts were used by Cosimo to claim his knowledge and authority on the newly discovered lands, in his attempt to insert the Americas in his political agenda. The portolan map of the New World that Cosimo commissioned to the *provveditore* of Livorno Bernardo Baroncelli,

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<sup>7</sup> Stefaan Missinne (2013) has recently suggested that one of the first representations of the New World was an engraving on an ostrich egg. According to the scholar, the item would have been created with some links with the workshop of Leonardo da Vinci and it was part of a European, perhaps Italian, cabinet of curiosities.

the Riccardiana atlas 3616 that was Cosimo's personal property, and the world map by Lopo Homem (1554) acquired by the duke in 1560 shows in fact the interest that the duke had for the new lands.<sup>8</sup> The American theme was already present in the *apparato nuziale* created for Cosimo's wedding in 1539. As described by Pier Francesco Giambullari, personifications of Mexico and Peru were depicted in the triumphal arch erected in Porta al Prato:

Seguivala, pur dalla destra, un'altra donna ma ignuda, cinta d'una semplice cordella dalla quale giù dinanzi pendeva un filo per coprirla ciò che sempre sta bene ascoso et tenevasi costei con la destra, posata in su 'l capo, il nodo della acconciatura la quale dalle tempie rigirandosi riduceva i capegli al sommo alla usanza di quel paese et haveva nella altra mano una pigna mostrando per questo habito così fatto ch'ella era la prima occidental terra ferma sottoposta allo imperio. Dopo di lei, pure in cerchio, appariva il nuovo Perù figurato per una donna involta come in un telo senza maniche, legato sopra alle spalle, aperto et sopraposto dal lato manco et fermato sopra le carni con cintura larga due dita et uno quasi che sciugatoio in su 'l collo, con i suoi capegli sciolti. Haveva costei seco legata per gli orecchi una pecora del collo lungo che, sopra gli altri animali, bene si producono in quella regione (1539: 13-14).

As noticed by Giovanni Cipriani, the interest of Cosimo was constantly focused on the New World, "sia per gli stretti legami con Carlo V d'Asburgo, sia per naturali interessi economici, sia per spiccata curiosità" (1992: 228). As such, it is not surprising that Tullia d'Aragona celebrated Cosimo referring to the duke as "Cosmo, di cui dall'uno all'altro polo, / e donde parte, e donde torna il giorno, / non vede pari il sol girando intorno" (*Rime*, 1547, IV, 3-5). The poetess quoted indeed the expression usually used to indicate the "imperio en el que nunca se pone el sol" (The empire on which the sun never sets) of Charles V. The New World was also used as a tool for propaganda during the regency of Cosimo's sons Francesco and Ferdinando, who enlarged their father's *Kunstkammer* with all types of *naturalia* and

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<sup>8</sup> Baroncelli's portolan is in BNF, MS Magliabecchiano XIII, 6. It is possible that Baroncelli's portolan was the model for the New World maps depicted by Ignazio Danti and Stefano Buonsignori on the cupboard doors of the *guardaroba* in Palazzo Vecchio (1562). See Fiorani (2005: 107-108). For the Riccardiana atlas 3616 belonged to Cosimo and probably compiled by Francesco Ghisolfi see Astengo (1998: 179). For the acquisition by Cosimo of the world map by Lopo Homen see Cattaneo (2009: 13). This map is currently in the Museo Galileo in Florence.

*artificialia* from the Americas.<sup>9</sup> These curios had the pragmatic function of representing the desired Medici control overseas, and to promote Medici universality.

As we will see, the American pygmy collected by Cosimo acquired a specific meaning in the Medici collection, becoming a symbol of the duke himself and his entourage in the poems that we will analyse. Pygmies, unlike dwarves, were usually represented riding small animals, such as snails, turtles and birds that could work as a measure of comparison in order to highlight their smallness.<sup>10</sup> An example is the statues of two pygmies riding a snail and an owl in the garden of the Medici villa at Careggi (Jagiello-Kołodziej, 2009: 31; O' Bryan, 2012: 268-271) (fig. 85 and 86). They were often depicted with the features of famous court dwarves of the Medici family to please the duke who particularly enjoyed their company. During Cosimo's lifetime the pygmies-dwarves trope was seen as a peculiar feature of the duke himself, due to the passion that Cosimo showed for both new world items, and court dwarves. In this chapter I will show how the osmosis pygmies-dwarves was used by poets to describe the Medici household and the reformation events subverting the Medicean Accademia Fiorentina.

### **The New World in the *Nanea***

Between April and May 1547 Michelangelo Serafini, fellow of the Accademia Fiorentina, composed the *Nanea*, a burlesque poem in octaves about the mythical war

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<sup>9</sup> Markey, L., *Grand Dukes Francesco and Ferdinando de' Medici and the Americas*, paper presented at the 2009 RSA Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, CA. A "pigmeo imbalsamato in carne e in ossa" was presented by the merchant Giovanni Francesco Morabito to Francesco I as reported in a letter dated 8<sup>th</sup> October 1577 (Barocchi & Gaeta Bertelà, 1993: 137).

<sup>10</sup> The Greek word πυγμή, meaning 'forearm', indicates the size pygmies were believed to be.

between pygmies and giants.<sup>11</sup> The work is part of a literary triptych that includes Girolamo Amelonghi's *Gigantea* and Anton Francesco Grazzini's *Guerra de' mostri*, conceived of as a parodical response to the 1547 reforms that subverted the structure and the ideology of the Accademia Fiorentina. Girolamo Amelonghi's *Gigantea* is a mock-heroic poem about giants scaling Mount Olympus and declaring war on the Gods, possibly based on the now lost *Gigantomachea* by Betto Arrighi. Serafini narrates the revenge taken by the Gods on the giants thanks to the help of the pygmies, while Grazzini's *Guerra de' mostri* concludes the series by reporting the epic deeds of the monsters' army.<sup>12</sup>

The *Nanea* is an epic in *ottava rima* divided into two cantos totalling 191 octaves in all. As mentioned above, it follows on from Amelonghi's *Gigantea* and is a direct response to his mock-heroic depiction of Gods and giants. Serafini picks up the story after the terrible defeat of the Gods at the hands of the giants, as related by Amelonghi. The *Nanea* opens with Jupiter asking the pygmy king Pimmeo and his valiant pygmies to join forces with the Gods to recapture Mount Olympus. Pimmeo, recently returned from a victory over the cranes, convenes his councillors to a meeting and, following a short debate, the pygmies agree to help the Gods with their revenge. The first canto is almost entirely dedicated to the description of the pygmies' ridiculous armaments, such as fish scales, shells, crystals, grass and so on, as well as giving an overview of the birds they ride in order to reach the battlefield in the sky. In the second canto, pygmies and giants fight ferociously, until the giant Balestraccio and the

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<sup>11</sup> Serafini will join the Accademia Fiorentina in September 1548. Although at the time of the composition of the *Nanea* he was not yet a formal member of the Accademia, Serafini was already part of the Florentine literary circuit thanks to his teacher Andrea Dazzi. For a study of Serafini's biography see Crimi & Spila (2006: 141-143).

<sup>12</sup> The link between the three poems is well highlighted by Grazzini in the second stanza of the *Guerra de' mostri*: "Ma ora un Gobbo, poeta Pisano, / Da certi Gigantacci sgangherati / Ha fatto a' Dei togliere il ciel di mano, / Che pel dolor si sarien fatti frati: / Se non che dal valor del popol Nano / L'altro di fur difesi e liberati, / con modi, non so già, se belli o buoni; / Ma chi lo crede, il ciel glielie perdoni". Girolamo Amelonghi was nicknamed Gobbo of Pisa because hunch-backed.

pygmy Bitonto decide to determine the outcome of the battle by confronting each other in a duel. Although Bitonto is victorious, the giants do not accept the defeat and return to the battlefield with fury. The battle proceeds with even greater violence, until the pygmy army, encouraged by Pimmeo's rousing speech, succeed in forcing the enemy to flee. The canto ends with a sumptuous banquet organised by Jupiter to thank his valorous allies.

The few studies of the *Nanea* that exist focus mainly on questions of attribution and historical context. Both questions are relevant to my study, and are worth a brief review here for that reason. The earliest scholarship on the *Nanea*, dating to the Nineteenth Century, is concerned with the question of authorship. Until the second half of the century, the *Nanea* was believed to have been written by Grazzini as it appeared in a 1612 edition together with the *Gigantea* and the *Guerra de' mostri*. This combination of the poems led to the long-held assumption that all three works were written by the same author. It was not until 1882 that authorship of the *Nanea* was correctly attributed to Serafini, when Carlo Verzone explained in detail why the poem could not have been written by Grazzini (1882, IX-CXXIV). His main evidence was the discovery by Domenico Moreni of a manuscript copy of the poem with the name of Serafini on the title page. The acronym MSAF, present on the printed edition and considered to be a pseudonym of Grazzini, was interpreted by Verzone as meaning "Michelagnolo Serafini Accademico Fiorentino". Although Verzone's thesis was convincing and supported by the available evidence, in 1900 Maria Savi-Lopez continued to attribute the *Nanea* to Grazzini in *Nani e folletti*, a work about dwarves and sprites in literature (2002: 318-329). The scholar provided a detailed summary of the *Nanea*, but she limited her investigation to the plot alone.

In the Twentieth Century interest in the *Nanea* dwindled and has only recently been rekindled. In 1974, Michel Plaisance investigated for the first time the historical and cultural

context in which the poem was written: the Accademia Fiorentina. With great acuity he proposed reading the *Nanea* as a parody of the diatribe between two groups of Academicians: the Umidi, as represented by the giants, and the Arameans, *id est* the pygmies (Plaisance, 2004: 181-183). The Umidi were the original founders of the Accademia degli Umidi (1541), renamed the Accademia Fiorentina a few months after it was opened following the wish of Cosimo, who considered it a useful tool for Medicean cultural policy. The Arameans were, by contrast, a group of intellectuals led by Giovan Battista Gelli and Pier Francesco Giambullari who claimed that the Italian language derived from Aramaic. In 1547, a series of reforms ruptured the fragile equilibrium between the two groups, leading to the expulsion of almost all the Umidi from the Accademia, and strict censorship of the works produced by them.

More recently, Giuseppe Crimi and Cristiano Spila have made the *Nanea* much more accessible to the reading public by producing a critical edition of the poem. Implementing a meticulous philological method, the two scholars based their work on a manuscript today preserved in Florence's National Library, and on five printed editions including the *editio princeps* of 1566 (Crimi and Spila, 2004: 159-170).<sup>13</sup> Their merit is to have restored a poem previously only available in expurgated editions to its original form, finally allowing a complete and thorough analysis of the *Nanea*. Crimi and Spila agree with Plaisance's thesis as to the allegorical meaning of the pygmies and giants, validating this interpretation with many examples. Whilst my reading also supports this identification of the giants and pygmies with

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<sup>13</sup> Manuscript: Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Magl. VII. 1149 (ex Stroz. 4°, 534). *Editio princeps*: *La Nanea*, in *La Gigantea insieme con la Nanea*, Florence: Alessandro Ceccarelli, 1566. Other printed editions: *La Gigantea et la Nanea insieme con la Guerra de mostri*, Florence: Antonio Guiducci, 1612, pp. 61-122; *Della Nanea*, in *Poemi diversi*, Florence: Allegrini, 1772, pp. 53-126; *La Nanea*, in *Poesie di eccellenti autori toscani per far ridere le brigate*, Leiden: Van-Der Bet, 1823, II, pp. 55-137; *La Nanea*, in *Scelta di poemi giocosi*, Milan: Nicolò Bettoni, 1833, pp. 23-36. I base my analysis on the emend edition of the *Nanea* proposed by Crimi and Spila.

the Umidi and Arameans, it adds another angle to the existing scholarship by focusing on the presence and importance of New World elements in the poem.

The *Nanea* is clearly inspired by the classical geranomachy, since canto I, 5-7 describes the mythical fight between the pygmies and the cranes. But to what extent and in what ways are the dwarfish men described in the poem indebted to Cartier's pseudo-discovery of pygmies in Canada? Were they inspired at all by such accounts of the New World?<sup>14</sup> These are questions worth asking due to the existence in the Accademia Fiorentina of a debate regarding the presence of pygmies in the New World, favoured by Benedetto Varchi, an august member of the Accademia. I will leave my analysis of this debate and Varchi's claims to a later stage, beginning here with close textual analysis of the *Nanea*.

The main element to consider is the geographical location in the poem of the island where the battle between pygmies and cranes is fought. This island is indicated as the place where "Ulisse a capo fitto / Scongiurò l'ombra et nel pantan s'ascese" (I, 4, 1-2). According to Crimi and Spila, this island should be identified as Pharos, if we take the poem's assertion that it lies just off the Egyptian coast literally. The scholars suggest that the periphrasis indicates the Mediterranean Sea, referring to the episode in the *Odyssey* where Ulysses is washed up on an island and ensconces himself in the reeds (*Od.*, V, 424-493). However, this episode did not take place on Pharos, as Crimi and Spila imply, but instead on Scheria where Ulysses met Nausicaa; it was, rather, the Greek hero Menelaus who travelled to Pharos (*Od.*, IV, 354-355). This confusion suggests that the verse, despite initial appearances, may not be

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<sup>14</sup> It is worth making clear that in the poem Serafini uses both the words 'pigmei' and 'nani' to indicate the same characters, so that the two terms are interchangeable. The dwarfish men described in the poem are clearly pygmies due to their fight against the cranes (*Nanea*, I, 5-7), and other references to the classical myth. However, the poem is titled *Nanea* with a focus on 'nani', dwarves. This is probably a pun created by Serafini himself to indicate in the title the parodic component of his poem, because 'nano', as claimed by Crimi and Spila (2004: 153), is one of the Italian words that Giambullari believed to derive from Aramaic language (Giambullari, 1546: 56). However, we will see later that the word 'nani' is also used as a reference to the dwarves living at the Medici court.

as straightforward a reference to the *Odyssey* as one might think. We must therefore seek its origin elsewhere.

Crimi and Spila argue that Pharos would have been a suitable location due to Aristotle's belief that pygmies were to be found at the source of Nile (*Historia animalium*, VIII, 12), and that it would therefore have made sense for Serafini to locate the geranomachy somewhere relatively nearby. The problem with this claim is that in the Sixteenth Century the source of the Nile was still a mythical place in an unknown area of Africa, having nothing to do with Egypt and, in any case, very far away from Pharos. The Roman expeditions promoted by Nero in AD 62 to discover the sources were a miserable failure (Seneca, *De terrae motu*, VI, IX, 3-5; Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, VI, 35, 181), and the legendary Mountains of the Moon, claimed to be the source of the Nile by the Greek merchant Diogenes (Ptolemy, *Geographia*, IV, 8), did not have a credible geographical location. It was only in 1770 that the Scottish explorer James Bruce found the sources of the Blue Nile in Lake Victoria, whilst the sources of the White Nile were only discovered in the Nineteenth Century in Uganda.<sup>15</sup> If Serafini were really following the *Historia animalium*, as claimed by Crimi and Spila, he would have depicted the geranomachy as taking place in the mythical Mountains of the Moon, where the pygmies were formerly believed to be based, and not in Egypt or on a Mediterranean island such as Pharos.

In my opinion, Serafini had neither the *Odyssey* nor the *Historia animalium* in mind, but was referring, instead, to the *Divina commedia*, and in particular to the *terzine* depicting Ulysses. The Ulysses Serafini is referring to is, in other words, the Dantesque one, who convinces his crew to “seguir virtute e canoscenza” (*Inf.*, XXVI, 120) in crossing the insurmountable Pillars of Hercules, considered the limits of the known world. The fact that

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<sup>15</sup> On the search for the sources of the Nile see Block Friedman & Mosler (2000: 418); Pollard (2010: 18-19).



the Ulysses in the *Nanea* is the Dantean one is fundamental to our analysis because the island of the geranomachy can thus be located in the Atlantic Ocean, where Dante suggested the island of Purgatory was to be found.

In order to identify the link between the Ulysses of Serafini and that of Dante, we should consider the reception of Dante's Ulysses and his journey in the Sixteenth Century, when to speak of Ulysses in poetry was almost automatically to refer to Dante's version of the Greek hero's story. In his outstanding study of the myth of Ulysses over the centuries, Piero Boitani refers to Pulci's *Morgante*, Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* and Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* to demonstrate that the "Rinascimento consacra [...] un Ulisse intertestualmente dantesco" (1992: 66). Influenced by the new geographical discoveries that by Pulci's time had already changed the topography used in literature,<sup>16</sup> the new heroes and paladins described in epics were strongly modelled on Dante's Ulysses, forging their own destiny and seeking it beyond the Pillars of Hercules. The topic has been analysed by numerous scholars, who often argue that Ariostean and Tassian knights are depicted as new 'Ulysseses', tracing the similarities between the way a single character is treated in a variety of different epics. For example, in his essay *Two Odysseys*, Ronald L. Martinez identifies the Christian paladin Rinaldo with Dante's Ulysses, not only in the *Morgante*, in which Rinaldo tells Charlemagne that he wants to cross the Pillars of Hercules like Ulysses (XXVIII, 29, 3-4), but also in the *Innamorato* and in the *Furioso*, in which the figure of Rinaldo is indebted to Pulci's poem (1999: 21-24).<sup>17</sup> Other scholars, such as Patrick J. Cook (1994: 125) and Ita Mac Carthy (2007b: 17), link the figure of Dante's Ulysses to Ruggiero, who goes beyond the Herculean limits of Europe in his journey to Alcina's island. Although Ariosto, unlike Pulci and Tasso,

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<sup>16</sup> When Pulci was writing the *Morgante* (1461-1483) the Portuguese expeditions along the Western coasts of Africa were already changing the shape of the world.

<sup>17</sup> On the identification of Rinaldo with Dante's Ulysses see also Hart (1996: 22).

does not quote directly from Dante's Ulysses, the influence of the *Divina commedia* on his description of Ruggiero's journey has been abundantly elucidated by Albert Russell Ascoli, who dedicated a chapter of his *Ariosto's Bitter Harmony* to this topic. Ascoli's analysis is particularly interesting because the scholar concludes by identifying Alcina's island with Dante's island of Purgatory, locating them somewhere in the far Atlantic (1987: 184-185). The identification of Dante's Ulysses with Ruggiero and, by extension, with Christopher Columbus connects therefore the geographical places that these characters aimed to, or did indeed, reach. In other words, Purgatory, the island of Alcina and Hispaniola are one and the same.

Serafini was certainly aware of such literary adaptations of Dante's Ulysses, as is demonstrated by the numerous references to Pulci, Boiardo and, in particular, Ariosto that are present in the *Nanea*, and which are accurately listed by Crimi and Spila. The author was probably also influenced by the role that the *Divina commedia* played in the Accademia Fiorentina as a cultural tool of Medicean power. Cosimo wished to elevate Dante to the same level as Petrarch and Boccaccio, who were singled out by Pietro Bembo as the only linguistic models to follow, in order to increase the importance of the Florentine language and literature.<sup>18</sup> The duke offered the majestic Sala del Papa in Santa Maria Novella to the academicians to hold a series of *Lectura Dantis* on Sunday evenings, lectures that Serafini almost certainly attended as a fellow of the Accademia. His use of Dante's Ulysses could therefore be read as a strategic way to adapt his work to this literary trend, as well as to reproduce in his poem not only the dispute between Umidi and Arameans, but also the cultural and linguistic debates taking place in the Accademia.

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<sup>18</sup> On the role of Dante in the Accademia Fiorentina see De Gaetano (1968); Sherberg (2003); Mazzacurati (2007).

If we agree that Serafini's Ulysses can trace his origins to the *Divina commedia*, we can then identify the island of the geranomachy as Mount Purgatory which, by this time, was stoutly in New World. The Renaissance interpretation of Dante's Ulysses made the *Commedia* part of a series of literary works that foretell the discovery of the New World, such as Seneca's *Medea* (First Century AD), Lucian of Samosata's *True Story* (Second Century AD) and Pulci's *Morgante* (1483).<sup>19</sup> From the Sixteenth Century Ulysses's journey was read as a sort of prophecy of the discovery of the New World, and Mount Purgatory was interpreted as one of the Caribbean islands later visited by Columbus and Vespucci. Various scholars suggest that after the discovery of America by Columbus the mountain of Purgatory sighted by Dante's Ulysses was considered part of the New World, although they arrive at this conclusion from different paths. On one hand, scholars such as Antonello Gerbi (1975: 243) and William C. Spengemann (1994: 103-104) analyse the use the first chroniclers of the New World made of the *Divina commedia*. The scholars highlight, for example, how as early as 1502 Vespucci quoted from Dante's depiction of Ulysses in describing his second voyage in the famous letter from Lisbon. Navigators and conquistadores believed themselves to be the

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<sup>19</sup> Seneca prophesied the discovery of America at the end of *Medea*'s second chorus: "Veniet annis secula seris, / quibus Oceanus vincula rerum / laxet et ingens pateat tellus / Tethysque novos detegat orbes / nec sit terries ultima Thule", [Times will come in future years / When Ocean looses the bonds / Of things, the vast earth lies open, / Tethys uncovers new worlds, / and Thule is not land's end] *Medea*, 375-79, translation in Boyle (2014: 29-31). In the *True Story*, Lucian of Samosata reported the adventures experienced with a group of companions sailing westward through the Pillars of Hercules. The island they reached after seventy-nine days of navigation (threescore and nineteen days) was inhabited by half women and half vines creatures, who seduced some of Lucian's companions transforming them into vines (beginning of book I). In Luigi Pulci's *Morgante* the devil Astarotte revealed the existence of a new world to Rinaldo: "Un error lungo e fioco, / per molti secol non ben cognosciuto, / fa che si dice «d'Ercul le colonne» / e che più là molti periti sonne. / Sappi che questa oppinione è vana, / perché più oltre navicar si puote, / però che l'acqua in ogni parte è piana, / benché la terra abbi forma di ruote. / Era più grossa allor la gente umana, / tal che potrebbe arrossirne le gote / Ercule ancor d'aver posti que' segni, / perché più oltre passeranno i legni" (XXV, 228-230). On the prophecy of the discovery of the Americas in these works see in particular Clay (1992); Romm (1994); Cardinali (2001-2002).

executors of events prophesied long before, conferring in this way sacredness and mysticism on their feats.

On the other hand, scholars like Dino Bigongiari (1992) and Piero Boitani (1992) suggest that the connection between Dante's Ulysses and Columbus can be located in the exegesis of the *Commedia* during the Renaissance period. In his lecture about *Inferno XXVI* (1950s), Bigongiari claimed that Dante's Ulysses was identified to such an extent with Columbus as to discourage Renaissance Italian poets from celebrating the New World in epic poems: "It isn't likely that Columbus will ever be more fittingly celebrated in Italian poetry than he has been, by anticipation, in Dante" (1992: 119). Following Bigongiari, Boitani considers Dante's Ulysses to be the 'figura' and Columbus the 'compimento' of the discovery of America, highlighting how Renaissance commentators of Dante's Ulysses and poets interpreted the "nova terra" (*Inf.*, XXVI, 137) referred to by Dante as the New World (1992: 68, 2012: 8). Boitani draws attention, for example, to the Sixteenth-Century scholar of the *Commedia* Bernardino Daniello who, in referring to the Ulysses' episode in his posthumously-published *Esposizione* of 1568, writes: "Per queste parole, par che voglia accennare il Poeta, ch'egli avesse opinion, che ancora di là dello stretto di Zibeltarro, si potesse navigando penetrare verso l'altro Polo à nuove regioni, & luoghi da moderni ritrovati, & non conosciuti da gli antichi naviganti" (Hollander & Schnapp, 1989: 120, quoted in Boitani, 1992: 70-71).

A third school of thought should be added to these two approaches, which claims that the impact of the Americas on the reception of the *Divina commedia* can be found in Renaissance maps representing Dante's globe. Theodore J. Cachey (2007) and Toby Lester (2009) analyse one of the woodcuts that Girolamo Benivieni included in his *Dialogo di Antonio Manetti circa al sito, forma et misure dello Inferno di Dante Alighieri* (1506), in

which Benivieni relays the conclusions of his friend Antonio Manetti regarding the geographical coordinates of Dante's topography in the *Divina commedia*. The woodcut is a representation of Dante's cosmographical system, with Jerusalem at the top and Mount Purgatory at the bottom, inserted in a stylised map of the world (fig. 87). Similarly, Cachey and Lester arrive at the conclusion that the lands depicted close to Mount Purgatory should be considered as part of the New World, although they do not agree on their identification of these lands. Cachey believes that only the peninsular protrusions emerging on the left side of Mount Purgatory should be identified with the American territories (2007: 454), while Lester suggests that the lands on its right should also be interpreted as the New World (2009: 293). The scholars do not explain the reasons for these differing interpretations, but the location of Mount Purgatory in the geographical section representing the New World is indicative of the perceived affinity between Dante's island and the Americas. In my opinion, the confirmation that the lands close to Mount Purgatory should indeed be considered as the New World is present in Benivieni's *Dialogo* itself, where the character Manetti affirms that to understand Dante's cosmography, one should take into consideration "el Mantellino di Ptolomeo, et la Charta da navigare, perché l'uno aiuta l'altro [...] oltre allo havere un poco di disegno, et sapere le sexte et el regolo" (1897: 38-39, quoted in Foà, 2000: 185). This affirmation shows us that cartographic representations were used by Sixteenth-Century commentators of the *Divina commedia* to adapt the structure of Dante's globe to the geographical knowledge of their own time. Serafini probably had a good knowledge of Benivieni's *Dialogo*, as the work was still read and considered to be the most authoritative study of the structure of Dante's hell at the end of the Sixteenth Century. In fact, in 1587 and 1588 Galileo Galilei was invited by the Accademia Fiorentina to deliver two lectures "circa la figura, sito e grandezza dell'Inferno di Dante", during which he gave his backing to Manetti's structure of Dante's hell rather than

to the model proposed by Alessandro Vellutello in 1544. In his study of Galileo's early works, Thomas Settle suggests that Manetti's theory and the woodcuts introduced by Benivieni were the "standard Florentine interpretation of Dante's intentions [...] which the Accademia Fiorentina eventually asked Galileo to elucidate" (2001: 835).

Dante's geography was therefore re-interpreted to match new understandings of world geography, meaning that Serafini's island can indeed be understood as being part of the American territory. Let us read again the verses indicating the location of the island of the pygmies and cranes: "Giace là ove Ulisse a capo fitto / Scongiurò l'ombre et nel pantan s'ascose / un' isoletta al principio d'Egitto". This place, in other words, is located close to where Ulysses, with his head down ("a capo fitto"), died ("scongiurò l'ombre") in the Atlantic Ocean ("et nel pantan s'ascose"). When Serafini depicts Ulysses as being "a capo fitto" he could be referring to the floundering of Ulysses' ship close to Mount Purgatory. In *Inferno* XXVI, the strong wind created by the mountain shakes the Greek vessel making "levar la poppa in suso / e la prora ire in giù" (*Inf.*, XXVI, 140-141). Interpreting the vessel as a personification of Ulysses himself, the hero falls into the ocean with his feet up (the *poppa* refers to the rear part of the ship) and with his head down (the *prua* is the stern), so that his head, guilty of the unquenchable thirst for knowledge that led the crew to the *folle volo*, is the first part of Ulysses' body to be punished. However, this could also be a reference to the ancient belief that the people of the antipodes were forced to live 'upside-down', a theory used by Aristotle and medieval theologians to deny the habitability of hypothetical lands in the Southern Hemisphere (Goldie, 2010: 20). The term "pantan" should be read here as a general term to indicate a space of water, considering that Dante defined the Styx River in such a way (*Inf.*, VII, 110). It could also be interpreted as a reference to the Umidi, as water

was the symbol of their Accademia.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the mention of Egypt, which leads Crimi and Spila to argue that the island of geranomachy was located close to this country, could be interpreted as a reference to the biblical island of Ophir, that was for a long time believed to be part of Egypt, as reported in the Book of Kings (IX, 28). Ophir was believed to have been found in the Atlantic Ocean, along with numerous other legendary islands and territories such as Saba, Tharsis and Cipangu. Columbus himself identified Ophir with Hispaniola in a letter dated 1502 to Pope Alexander VI (Lester, 2009: 281), and the identification was reported by numerous historiographers and geographers such as Peter Martyr (*Decades*, I, 3, 1) and Abraham Ortelius (*Geographia sacra*).<sup>21</sup>

The American location of the island of pygmies and cranes is not the only New World element present in the *Nanea*. Another reference can be found in the epithet ‘Indiani’ or ‘Indi’ attributed to the giants: “Gli Dei fecer un cerchio agl’Indiani” “e a gran vincitor de’ superbi Indi / liberator de’ celesti frascati” (*Nanea*, II, 23, 5-6; II, 88, 3-4). This identification can be explained by the fact that the giants in Girolamo Amelonghi’s *Gigantea* are set in India Pastinaca: “Dell’alta schiatta Gigantea briaca / Ritrovat’ oggi in India Pastinaca” (*Gigantea*,

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<sup>20</sup> Water was the symbol of the Accademia degli Umidi, in contrast to the fire that symbolised the Accademia degli Infiammati of Padua. Every member of the Accademia had a nickname that related to water, and the member Baccio Baccelli was in fact called the ‘Pantanoso’ (the swampy one). These epithets were interchangeable to indicate the democratic and egalitarian spirit animating the Umidi, as reported in the mission statement of the Accademia: “E perché questa nostra academia degli humidi è creata per passatempo vogliamo e intendiamo che la sia del tutto libera” (Werner, 2008: 264). This is the list of the Umidi and their nicknames as reported by Inge Werner: Antonfrancesco Grazzini (“il Lasca / the rock-bass”), Cinzio Romano (“l’Humoroso / the juicy one”), Niccolò Martelli (“il Gelato / the congealed one”), Filippo Salvetti (“il Frigido / the frigid one”), Simone della Volta (“l’Annacquato / the diluted one”), Piero Fabbrini (“l’Assiderato / the frozen one”), Bartolomeo Benci (“lo Spumoso / the foamy one”), Gismondo Martelli (“il Cygno / the swan”), Michelangelo Vivaldi (“il Torbido / the turbid one”), Baccio Baccelli (“il Pantanoso / the swampy one”) and Paolo de’ Geri (“lo Scoglio / the rock”) (2008: 260). Notice also that Neptune is called “Humido Dio del mare” (*Nanea*, II, 90, 5).

<sup>21</sup> On the identification of the Egyptian island of Ophir with Hispaniola see in particular Christides (1970); Flint (1992).

3, 8).<sup>22</sup> India Pastinaca is a fictional toponym like Cockaigne (*Nanea*, I, 59, 5) or Ogamagoga (*Nanea*, II, 70, 8), used for the first time by Boccaccio as one of the imaginary places visited by Friar Cipolla (*Decameron*, VI, 10). It indicates the birthplace of folly, as we can see in *La pazzia*, a translation of Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* attributed to Vianesio Albergati (1530), in which the place of publication is fictionally identified as India Pastinaca.<sup>23</sup> In the *Gigantea* this toponym is directly connected to the New World, as we can read in the dedication letter written by Girolamo Amelonghi to Alfonso de' Pazzi (nicknamed Etrusco): "Rallegrandomi meco medesimo, che mercè della mia Musa, qual ella si sia, è ito l'altero grido dell'ETRUSCO negli Antipodi, nell'Isole del Perù a quello che condisce di dolcezza il tutto tra i Giganti nell'INDIA PASTINACA" (Amelonghi, 1612: 5-6).<sup>24</sup> These lines suggest that the giants are to be found in Peru, as also indicated in another anonymous *Gigantea* written in the same period recently discovered by Giuseppe Crimi in the Bologna University Library: "Al Perù, nelle terre di ponente, / di che hoggi si fa tanto rumore, / s'è ritrovata d'una razza gente / che non si vidde gia mai la maggiore" (Crimi, 2012: 196n.).<sup>25</sup> The fact that the giants in both these *Gigantea* come from America helps us to validate the hypothesis that the pygmies in the *Nanea* could also be connected with the New World. As such, they could be

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<sup>22</sup> India Pastinaca is quoted also in *Gigantea*, 54, 4; 125, 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Pazzia (La)*. In fine. Stampato in India Pastinaca, per Messer non mi biasimate, al uscire delle Mascare ET delle Pazzie Carneualesche. Con Gratia ET Privilegio di tutti i cervelli heteroclititi ET con espresso protesto che chiunque di questa Pazzia dirà male, s'intenda d'allhora in poi essere Pazzo da dovero quantunque per tale non fosse conosciuto. In-ottavo. Circa metà del secolo XVI.

<sup>24</sup> The islands of Peru are also present in Grazzini's *Canto di giovani fiorentini tornati dall'isole del Perù*, in Singleton (1936: 441).

<sup>25</sup> *Gigantea*, Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria 1250 (olim 828), cc. 273r-281v: 273r. I am indebted to Rita de Tata and the manuscript division of the Bologna University Library for having sent me a photographic reproduction of this manuscript. This anonymous *Gigantea* could be the lost *Gigantea* written by Betto Arrighi, but Crimi sustains that there are not enough evidences to prove that this is the case. However, he plans to further investigate the link between the anonymous *Gigantea* and the one written by Amelonghi, as numerous Academicians accused Amelonghi of stealing Arrighi's work (Crimi, 2012: 199).



considered as the forefathers of the pygmies in Stigliani and Bartolomei's poems, showing that they appeared in epic poems far sooner than is commonly thought.

In Serafini's poem, the New World is discovered by the intrepid pygmy Chionzo, when he decides to explore the huge body of a dead American giant by entering through a wound. What Chionzo discovers is an unknown world: "et vi trovò nuovo ciel, nuovo mare / diversi pur da questo nostro in terra, / nuove foggie, nuov'arti, assai campagne / cittadi, ville, fossati et montagne" (*Nanea*, II, 66, 5-8). As the giant is lifeless, Chionzo is safe from being eaten, defecated or expelled. Instead, he is directly assimilated into the giant when he decides to pass the limits of his known world to explore the marvels of the giant's body. The lines describing the world found by Chionzo echo the lunar world discovered by Astolfo in his trip to recover Orlando's lost wits:

Altri fiumi, altri laghi, altre campagne  
sono là su, che non son qui tra noi;  
altri piani, altre valli, altre montagne,  
c'han le cittadi, hanno i castelli suoi,  
con case de le quai mai le più magne  
non vide il paladin prima né poi:  
e vi sono ample e solitarie selve,  
ove le ninfe ognor cacciano belve.  
(*Orlando furioso*, XXXIV, 72)

Whilst Ariosto's moon is a mirror of the earth, it should also be considered as a 'new world', as suggested by Barbara Fuchs (2001: 16) and Ita Mac Carthy (2009: 74), because it reflects an altered and different version of the reality. Astolfo uses familiar tools and words to describe the moon creating analogies with the reality, but what he discovers is a world completely unknown and worth exploring. Astolfo and Chionzo's adventures recall another similar literary journey: that of Alcofrybas's entry into the giant Pantagruel's body. In François Rabelais's *Pantagruel* (1534), Alcofrybas, pseudonym of Rabelais, does indeed discover a new world inside Pantagruel's mouth:

Mais, ô Dieux et Deesses, que veiz je là? Jupiter me confonde de sa fouldre trisulque se j'en mens. Je y cheminoyz comme l'on faict en Sophie à Constantinoble, et y veiz de grans rochiers comme les mons des Dannoys, je croys que c'estoient ses dentz, et de grands prez, de grandes forestz, de fortes et grosses villes, non moins grandes que Lyon ou Poictiers. [...] - Jesus, - dis-je, - il y a icy un nouveau monde? (*Pantagruel*, II, 32)

O gods and goddesses! what did I see there? Jupiter confound me with his trisulc lightning if I lie! I walked there as they do in Sophia (at) Constantinople, and saw there great rocks, like the mountains in Denmark--I believe that those were his teeth. I saw also fair meadows, large forests, great and strong cities not a jot less than Lyons or Poictiers. [...] Jesus! said I, is there here a new world? (Rabelais, 1970: 176).

Alcofrybas, like Chionzo and Astolfo, discovers a 'new world', but this time with clear references to the newly discovered lands overseas. Rabelaisian scholars have usually identified Jamet Brayer, captain of Pantagruel's fleet, with Jacques Cartier; and king Panigon that Pantagruel met on the Chely island (IV, 10) as Donnacona (Tilley, 1908; Donaldson-Evans, 2004: 29-30).<sup>26</sup> The pygmies that are first expelled from Pantagruel's body by his flatulence (II, 27), and then eaten by him for breakfast (IV, 7), can therefore be identified as the pygmies recently discovered by Cartier, the new world being an allegory of Canada. In his interpretation of the world inside Pantagruel's body, Erich Auerbach highlights how Alcofrybas speaks of the new world using the same expressions of wonder that Western people at the time might have used to refer to the Americas (2003: 268). Following Platonic and Aristotelian precepts about wonder being the origin of philosophy, Alcofrybas's astonishment can be seen as the first step of a path to knowledge that will make the author engage with the new reality so far ignored.<sup>27</sup> In recent years, a multitude of studies of wonder and the New World has been published, starting with the already mentioned *Marvellous*

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<sup>26</sup> Abel Lefranc (1905: 78) suggested that Rabelais could have met Cartier in person, basing his assertion on Jacques Doremant's manuscript where the poet and the navigator are listed in the same period in Saint-Malo in Brittany.

<sup>27</sup> On the link between marvellous and knowledge see Ardissino (2011).

*Possessions* by Stephen Greenblatt (1991). In his work, Greenblatt claims that “the experience of wonder continually reminds us that our grasp of the world is incomplete” (1991: 24), the perturbing truth comprehended by Alcofrybas upon entering Pantagruel’s mouth. Referring to real geographical places such as Turkey, Denmark and France, Rabelais gives us exact information on what are his terms for comparison: not generic rivers, lakes and mountains as in Astolfo’s case, but specific countries that can help Alcofrybas to complete his knowledge of reality. As suggested by Marica Milanesi (2004), the process of familiarization of the unknown New World was indeed characterised by the comparison of the newly discovered lands with places widely famous to Europeans.<sup>28</sup> Alcofrybas could be considered as a substitute for the first explorers of the New World, curious and astonished in the face of the new, while Pantagruel’s body can be therefore interpreted as a metaphor for the Americas.<sup>29</sup>

If Pantagruel’s body is the New World, then the pygmies recently discovered by Cartier can be considered as expelled from the new world to the outside world, Europe. But shortly after, they are sent back to their homeland, America, having been eaten by the giant. Their brief stay in the old world implies a lack of engagement with its inhabitants, as if to suggest that the Europeans are either incapable of communicating with them, or making use of them. If this is the case, Rabelais seems to criticise poets for their inability to take advantage of the material offered by the new geographical discoveries, trapped by habitual topics and characters and not opening their poems to the vast range of possibilities offered by the New World. Like Pantagruel, poets are capable of digesting the news brought back to Europe through the accounts of travellers and via oral testimonies, but their inability to use such marvellous material makes it completely useless. In this way the marvellous is reduced to the

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<sup>28</sup> Milanesi refers for instance to Mexico City considered a new Venice (2004: 183).

<sup>29</sup> It is possible that Serafini had the possibility to read *Pantagruel* as copies of Rabelais’s works were available in Florence in mid-Sixteenth Century (Tetel, 1969).

ridiculous, symbolised by Pantagruel's digestion of the melancholy pygmies, who spend their lives fleeing metaphorical cranes and whose hearts are too close to their intestines (II, 27).

Following Rabelais's work, it is possible to identify the body of the giant explored by Chionzo as a metaphor of the New World in the *Nanea*. First of all, the close link between Amelonghi's *Gigantea* and Serafini's *Nanea* allows us to claim that the giants in the *Nanea*, being the same giants described in the *Gigantea*, come from Peru.<sup>30</sup> The body of the dead giant could therefore be considered as a reference to the world the giant came from. Secondly, with his journey Chionzo achieves the goal of adding a new sea and a new land to the pygmy empire, as stated in the speech made by Perseus to King Pimmeo: "Signor, ch'al grande imperio vostro / nuovo mare aggiugnete et nuovo campo" (*Nanea*, I, 22, 1-2). Serafini seems to quote the *plus ultra* ("further beyond") motto here that incited the conquistadores to add new seas and lands to the Spanish empire. Opening the giant's wound and violating his body, the pygmy Chionzo enters into the New World, into the new "grande imperio", joining the giants in their American homeland.

Whilst *Pantagruel and Gargantua* describes a process of expulsion and re-absorption of news from overseas, the lack of a digestive process in the *Nanea* does not allow the New World pygmies to return to the outside world, Europe, from where the myth of the pygmies originated. It is likely that Serafini is criticising his peers in the Accademia Fiorentina more radically than Rabelais by using the image of Chionzo trapped inside the giant's body: not only did they not use New World material in their works, but they did not even believe in the veracity of the information coming from overseas, and so were unable to "digest" it. Such an

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<sup>30</sup> These are the names of the *Gigantea* giants cited by Serafini in the *Nanea* as reported by Crimi and Spila (2004: 186): Cerfuglio, Osiri, Cronagraffo, Gerastro, Galigastro, Lestrigone, Bacucco, Fracasso, Stregafarro, Spatanocca, Falarpio, Crisperio, Buccano, Fieramonte, Bucefalo, Macrocco, Tergeste, Troco, Cheffeo, Biviferro, Sarcofago, Ciamulgo, Forlocco, Treassi, Amacro, Barcichiocha, Aristore, Ciscrante, Bocco, Furore, Drautte, Rocchio, Sbaraglia, Babau, Ogige, Etrusco, Demogorgone, Morfuro, Corbulone, Balestraccio, Ciglogo, Briusse e Malanima.

interpretation might seem farfetched if not for the debate in the Accademia Fiorentina about the existence or not of New World pygmies. In the matter of this debate we will consider the section that the Academician Benedetto Varchi dedicated to the pygmy theme in his *Lezione sopra la generazione de' mostri* (1548). We will come back to this lecture shortly, but first we should conclude our analysis of the New Worldliness of the *Nanea* by stating that the pygmies described by Serafini can be considered New World pygmies in all respects. By positioning the island of the pygmies and cranes in the New World, and making Chionzo discover the American *mirabilia*, Serafini follows Cartier's account and the subsequent cartographic representations derived from explorations of French Canada. The use of American giants and pygmies in the poem allows us to claim that curiosity in the New World was more of a feature of the Medici court than might otherwise have been expected, an interest confirmed by the passion of Cosimo himself for New World artefacts. The presence of these New World creatures in the poem could have been a way to please the duke, or even, as we shall see later, a stratagem to indicate the role played by Cosimo in the Accademia Fiorentina and in Reformation debates.

### **Pygmies or dwarves?**

In 1548 Benedetto Varchi, the unofficial leader of the Accademia Fiorentina, gave a lecture about whether or not pygmies existed, with a particularly focus on New World pygmies. Varchi addressed a crowded audience, as the lecture was publicly given on a Sunday evening. The Sunday lectures, unlike the private, members-only sessions held on Thursday in the *Studio Fiorentino*, were open to everyone, and usually dedicated to important subjects such as the aforementioned *Lectura Dantis*. Judith Bryce, who has studied the nature of these

lectures, suggests that these public events were very popular, as we can infer from the *Annali* of the Marucelliana Library (Florence): “ ‘con grande concorso di popolo’ (fol. 4r, 1541), ‘con grata udienza d’infinito popolo’ (fol. 4v, 1541), ‘con grande moltitudine di popolo’ (fol. 8r, 1542), ‘con grande udienza di popolo’ (fol. 10r, 1542), ‘infiniti uditori’ (fol. 62r, 1550) and even ‘con infinitissimo numero di uditori’ (fol. 62r, 1549)” (Bryce, 1995: 80).<sup>31</sup> The fact that Varchi chose to discuss this topic in front of such of a large audience is indicative of the interest that New World pygmies may have held for the Accademia Fiorentina and for the general Florentine population.

In his lecture, Varchi asserted the baselessness of Cartier’s discovery, as he did not believe in the existence of pygmies in the New World: “Ancora che tutta la navigazione nuova, la quale ha girato la terra intorno intorno, non habbia mai trovato in luogo nessuno i Pigmei [...]” (1560: 135). Even more explicitly, he states that:

L’opinione nostra è (parlando Filosoficamente) che per la maggior parte cotali Mostri siano cose favolose, perchè nè la ragione gli persuade, nè gli mostra il senso, conciosia, che in tutto il mondo scoperto nuovamente a’ tempi nostri non se ne sono trovate vestigia alcune [...] & quando pure se ne trovassero sì massimamente per lo essere la Natura poco meno, che onnipotente, non crederei, che fussero huomini, come diremo di sotto de’ Pigmei, & altre così fatte generazioni” (1560: 99).

In his analysis of the *Generazione de’ mostri*, Lorenzo Montemagno Ciseri (2007: 310-311) identifies in the above passage a criticism of all the early modern explorers beginning with Columbus, who expected to find monsters in the New World as they were influenced by classical myths. According to Montemagno Ciseri, Varchi is accusing New World explorers of having imagined these monsters overseas, without considering the great multitude of monsters present in Europe. If this is so, it is possible also to say that Varchi extended this

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<sup>31</sup> Bryce refers to Marucelliana Library, Florence, B III 52-54, ‘Annali degli Umidi, poi Fiorentina’.

accusation of being irrational and fanciful not only to the explorers, but also to all the academicians who believed in the poetic potential that pygmies and other New World *mirabilia* could have had. Take Varchi's *Canzona de' mostri innamorati* for example, a burlesque poem in which Varchi explores the fictional possibilities of dwarves and other 'monsters' in literature (Singleton, 1936: 398). The *Canzona* is a poem Varchi wrote in February 1547 in occasion of the Carnival festivities of that year. According to Plaisance, the song inspired Amelonghi in the production of his *Gigantea*, as well as indirectly inspiring the poems by Serafini and Grazzini (2004: 175-176). Although the *Canzona* is a burlesque poem like Amelonghi, Serafini and Grazzini's works, the treatment of monsters in general, and of dwarves in particular, is very different. In the *Canzona*, Varchi refers to real pathological conditions that he defines "monstrous", such as blindness, deaf-mutism, hermaphroditism and lameness. Dwarfism, as well as gigantism, is treated from a medical point of view, with no reference to populations of pygmies or giants. The poet claims that as there is an abundance of 'monsters' in Florence, there is no need to seek them "outside", in faraway places: "Non guardate il difuori, / cercate dentro, e troverete cose / grandi [...]" (*Canzona de' mostri innamorati*, 63-65). According to Varchi, 'monsters' are present in everyday life, in the domestic space, inside the walls of his own town, and neither in the New World nor in other exotic and unknown places. We can recognise Varchi's point of view in the migration process of monsters from the margins of the world to Europe described by Wes Williams. The author claims in fact that monsters are more and more domesticated in the course of the early modern period, migrated "from the margins of creation - Africa, the Ancient World, and the New World, metaphor, and the depths of the sea - to the heart of early modern Europe" (2011: 4). The dwarves described in the *Canzona* were the Florentine dwarves, who took part in the 1547 Carnival parade together with hunchbacked and lame people, as reported by Amelonghi

in a letter to Cosimo (Crimi and Spila, 2004: 146n.). They were real ‘monsters’, able to delight the spectator (and the reader) without undertaking long journeys towards the borders of the world.

Like other natural philosophers, Varchi was trying to figure out what monstrosity was by introducing into his poem details of physical malformations that he and his peers observed and studied in the courts they lived in. Describing dwarfism and gigantism, he referred, for example, to the scientific theory followed at the time according to which dwarves and giants were created by the scarcity or abundance of seminal fluid (Simili, 2001: 84; Guidi, 2012: 89): “Questi Nani, che ’nsieme / Scherzan con quei Morganti, mostran chiaro, / Che mancò in quegli, in questi avanzò seme” (*Canzona de’ mostri innamorati*, 40-42). Its adversion to the mythological pygmies that some of his peers believed to live in the newly discovered lands can be as such considered a direct reply to Serafini. In the *Nanea*, Serafini was in fact not interested in aberrations of nature as Varchi, but to show how the New Worldiness of his pygmies could have added a new touch of marvel to an already marvelous topic. It is true that Serafini, as we will see now, described his pygmies with the same characteristics and names of Medici court dwarves. However, this was a way to create a contact between the world described in the *Nanea* and the Medici court, rather than to investigate dwarfism as a medical condition.

As suggested by the very title of his poem, Serafini identified his mythological pygmies with dwarves. Crimi and Spila show how in the *Nanea* pygmies’ proper nouns are mostly speaking names indicative of pygmies’ small size and foolishness, but they also refer to physical characteristics of the dwarves as believed in the Sixteenth Century. *Nocchio* and *Rocchio*, both synonyms of the penis, probably refer to dwarves’ hyper-sexuality considered a distinctive trait of dwarfism (Ghadessi, 2007: 103); while *Trastulla* is suggestive of the idea of



court dwarves as playthings (*trastullo* means toy), a concept abundantly investigated by Betty M. Adelson (2005) in her book dedicated to the historical perception of dwarfism. Gergaglio, as per Camporesi (2000: 60) and Crimi and Spila (2004: 219n.), is probably a reference to jargon (*gergo*), the language spoken by social outcasts known as *calcagnantes*, including dwarves. Serafini refers also to physical attributes of dwarves as in the case of Bitonto who “havea un capo grosso, ch’un secchione / a fargli un elmo apena era bastante. / Poscia lo smisurato suo nasone / ombra facea dal ponente al levante. / [...] Questo capone havea la testa infuora / e gl’occhi indentro a guisa di caverna” (*Nanea*, I, 78, 3-6; 79, 1-2). This is a reference to the macrocephaly, the saddle nose and the hypertrophic eyes typical of dwarves affected by achondroplasia, as suggested by Frederick Hecht (1990) in his medical investigation about the perception of this condition in the past. It is interesting that when Bitonto accepts the duel against the giant Balestraccio, he is fondly petted by the gods as if he were a pet animal: “Saturno, Giove et gli altri Dei di mano / in man ne vanno tutti allegri a volo / a far carezze et a toccar la mano / a lor sì audacissim’ homicciuolo” (*Nanea*, II, 42, 1-4). During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries dwarves were often identified with pets, as shown by the numerous portraits depicting court dwarves close to dogs, parrots, monkeys and other animals. The dwarves’ animality has been one of the most studied traits on the treatment and perception of household dwarves during the Renaissance period, as evident in the numerous articles about the physical proximity of dwarves and animals within the frame. Roberto Zapperi argues in his study of Agostino Carracci that the dwarves and animals featured in the *Composizione con figure e animali* (ca. 1596) are grouped together because they represent a superior form of animal, closer to humans than beasts, but nonetheless sub-human: “Sur l’échelon supérieur du monde animal, le plus proche de l’homme, se trouvaient les chiens, les singes et les perroquets; sur l’échelon inférieur du monde humain, le plus

proche de l'animal, il y avait les velus, les nains et les bouffons" (1985: 315). In the very different context of applied psychology, Yi-Fu Tuan arrives at a similar conclusion, highlighting the condescending treatment by humankind of animals, dwarves, slaves and other so-called 'freaks' of nature that they consider pets (1984: 157). Others suggest that the composition of renaissance paintings is representative of the proprietorial gaze of Renaissance princes and art collectors: dwarves, like the animals they stand beside, are rare and exotic possessions, symbols of the wealth and good taste of their owners. This is the view held by Joanna Woods-Marsden in *A Vision of Dwarves*, who suggested that dwarves, like the animals they were usually represented with, were considered personal properties and collectible objects (2010: 329). Serafini's description of the Gods caressing Bitonto and the identification of pygmies with dwarves could indicate that the poet is unable to imagine a population of self-governing independent pygmies, as described by Cartier, without having recourse to stereotypes about dwarves. This suggests on one side the limit of European imagination, and on the other the process of domestication of the New World myths. However, it also indicates that rather than an imaginary leap into the New World, Serafini brings the New World to Florence, his poem presenting an allegory of the Medici family and the Accademia Fiorentina. Cosimo was in fact often identified with Jupiter in the apotheosis of his persona, in the attempt to legitimise the Medici dukedom and present himself as the *de facto* ruler of the state (Cox-Rearick, 1993: 255; Veen, 2006: 10). As such, Bitonto appears as a property of the duke/Jupiter, delighted by the idea of having such a good servant/knight at his service and, at the same time, a brave 'animal' that has to be exalted/cuddled in appreciation of being the saviour of the battle.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> This practice will be later remembered by Giovan Battista Marino in the last octave of his poem about the dwarf Atlante, when he invites his readers to "Accarezzate dunque il vostro Nano" (*Atlante Nano*, 18, 1). On the ambiguous erotic meaning of cuddling dwarves see Spila (2009: 25).

The link between the Medici court and the characters described in the *Nanea* is made more explicit when Serafini mentions famous court dwarves that everyone in Florence would have easily recognised in his poem. In a letter by Tommaso di Iacopo de' Medici to Cosimo's major-domo Pier Francesco Riccio, the court dwarves living in December 1549 at the Medici court are listed: "Nani: Gradasso, Morgante, Filippino, Fattapio, Atalante, Don Grillino, Giammaria".<sup>33</sup> Three of them; Gradasso, Morgante and Fatappio, appear as characters in the *Nanea* (I, 44; I, 81; II, 26; II, 65; II, 69). Although these names were quite common for court dwarves, their presence in the *Nanea* suggests an explicit reference to Cosimo's dwarves, probably in order to catch the attention of the duke, as Cosimo particularly enjoyed the presence of these jesters. Stradanus depicted him accompanied by four dwarves in the engraving to celebrate his coronation as Grand Duke of Tuscany (after 1575, but the coronation took place in 1569, fig. 88); and his favourite dwarf Morgante was celebrated under his commission by numerous artists such as Bronzino (fig. 89), Vasari (fig. 90), Cioli (fig. 91) and Giambologna (fig. 92). Introducing these dwarves in the poem, Serafini was pleasing his duke and the Medici court, but above all he was indicating the position held by Cosimo in the dispute between the Arameans and Umidi. Close analysis of the pygmies in the *Nanea* reveals a great deal about the cultural environment the poem was produced in, the Accademia Fiorentina, as well as insights into the cultural policy of the Medici court. Scholars such as Plaisance, Crimi and Spila have shown the extent to which polarised treatments of the giants and pygmies help to reconstruct the dichotomised scheme of the Accademia, and to identify the tangled net of friendship, hostility and mockery between the fellows. Domenico Zanrè, for example, studied the names of the giants in the *Gigantea* that were re-used in the *Nanea* arriving at the conclusion that Etrusco was probably an alter ego of

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<sup>33</sup> ASF Med. Princ. 1175, insert 8, f. 44, 4<sup>th</sup> December 1549.

Alfonso de' Pazzi; Galiastro would represent Girolamo Amelonghi; Balestraccio would evoke the founder of the Accademia degli Umidi Stradino; while Osiris would be the portrait of Grazzini (2004: 105). The study of the interactions between the characters helped Zanrè to identify the relationships between the academicians, providing an important contribution to the scholarship working on the Accademia Fiorentina.

However, the role of Cosimo/Jupiter in the *Gigantea* and the *Nanea* has been so far neglected. As suggested by Henk Th. Van Veen (2006: 27) in his work on the self-representation of Cosimo, the duke considered the Arameans closer to his cultural agenda and regime than the original founders of the Accademia, finding support from Gelli and Giambullari to turn the Accademia Fiorentina into a state-controlled organ. Cosimo supported the Arameans' theories that Tuscany was the first area populated and civilized after the Flood, recognising Noah as the progenitor of the Florentines, and Hebrew as the language from which Florentine derived (Cipriani, 1980). It is probably not a coincidence then that Serafini associated the Aramean group with the court dwarves that Cosimo appreciated so much, showing the duke's preference for the group led by Gelli and Giambullari. Although inferior to the giants-Umidi in number and build, the dwarves-Arameans were able to win the epic battle and assume cultural leadership of the Accademia. In the same way that Jupiter put his trust in the pygmy army in the *Nanea*, Cosimo sided with the Arameans represented by the court dwarves that he was so fond of.

The association of the Arameans with pygmies was also supported by the New World artefacts exposed in Cosimo's *Kunstammer*, that were linked to the court dwarves because of their collectability. Following Neil Kenny's assertion that "the collecting of material objects was perhaps the literal term of a metaphor that spread to other discourses" (2006: 44), the *Nanea*'s pygmies can be considered objects of knowledge collected by the grand duke to

strengthen his power. Pygmies in the *Nanea* are described holding or wearing a number of items that we can recognise as usual collectible objects preserved in the cabinet of curiosities. Examples are the crane's eggshell used by Fatappio as armour (I, 44, 1-3), the bow and arrows typical of savageries handled by Scambo (I, 47, 3), the tortoiseshell used by Fricasso (I, 49, 1-2), the mermaid's tail covering Fasto's arms (I, 56, 5), and "lische di pesci et ugne di grifone, / ale di ragni e gambe assai di grillo, / becchi di uccelli e code di scorpione, zanne di porco et gran corna d'assillo" (I, 70, 1-4). In addition, there are numerous stones, shells and crystals handled by the pygmies that can be considered a reference to Cosimo himself, due to the duke's notorious passion for porphyry and hard stones (Butters, 1996). The accurate description of the pygmies with their armies and steeds could symbolise the microcosm that the duke aimed to reproduce in his *guardaroba*, suggesting that the Arameans were mere instruments used by the duke to support his regency and appease his persona. The Arameans appear to be part of Cosimo's collection, being associated with collectible "objects" such as the court dwarves and the *Kunstammer* items. Such association was made more explicit in the *Piato*, as we will see in the next section.

### **The New World in Arcigrandone's body**

In the same Academia Fiorentina where Serafini developed his *Nanea*, Agnolo Bronzino worked at two burlesque works in a way completing and reflecting the epic poem of his fellow Serafini. The poem *Il piato* (ca. 1552), and the painting representing the court dwarf Morgante, can be considered complementary to the works created by the Umidi as a consequence of the 1547 reformation. In this section, I will show how Bronzino used the New World pygmies in the *Piato* to subtly pun Cosimo and the Arameans, appealing to the interest

of the grand duke for New World items. Bronzino described the body of the giant Arcigrandone as the New World, a sick world the poet considered corrupted by syphilis and inhabited by debauched people. This negative image of the New World was used by the poet to create an equally negative image of the Medici court, as he attributed to the Medici milieu the same negative traits used to describe the American reality. In this way, Bronzino was able to cautiously express his discontent towards his patrons who allowed his estrangement from the Accademia Fiorentina. The grievance could not be explicit as Bronzino was still employed by Cosimo during the writing of the poem, but subtle elements of defiance against the Medici – that scholarship on Bronzino has recently identified also in other works<sup>34</sup> – can be spotted.

Around 1552, Bronzino composed his longest burlesque poem, *Il piato*, a work in eight parts of difficult interpretation given the use of a coded vocabulary and complex allegories. In the first seven *capitoli*, the character Bronzino climb up the body of the giant Arcigrandone starting from his foot and arriving until the head, experiencing a number of bizarre visions and marvellous encounters along the way. Most of the altercations lived by the main character are a mirror of life's paradoxes, and Bronzino find himself trapped in a world of arguments and capricious allusions. In the last *capitolo* the protagonist, having fallen down Arcigrandone's nostril, takes a journey inside the body of the giant through his mouth, gullet, stomach and intestine; until he finds his way out via a rectal fistula.

Arcigrandone has been interpreted by scholars in a number of different ways. Franca Petrucci Nardelli (1988: 403) and Claudio Mutini (1997: 81) suggest interpreting Bronzino's journey as an initiation to homoerotic sexual practices, considering in particular the figure of the chimera inside the giant's body as an allegory of sodomy. Deborah Parker (2001: 92) and Massimiliano Rossi (2010: 186) imagine the giant as a macrocosm, while Stephen J.

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<sup>34</sup> See pp. 213-214.

Campbell suggests that Arcigrandone, having being described as “a figure of truly *cosmic* dimensions” (2004: 119), should be identified with Cosimo I de’ Medici himself. I will add a new possible interpretation of Arcigrandone to present scholarship, identifying the internal body of the giant as a microcosm representing the New World. As well as Chionzo, in Arcigrandone’s body Bronzino discovers a new world: “Io mi pareva esser ’n un mondo nuovo, / che non v’ero più stato” (VIII, 37-38). But contrary to the fascinating world explored by the pygmy in the *Nanea*, the world inside Arcigrandone’s body has a negative connotation. It is difficult to breathe as the air is “spessa più che albume d’uovo” (*Piato*, VIII, 39), there is low visibility and the surroundings are cold, smelly and silent. The protagonist looks forward to leaving this sick world as soon as possible: “Mi sarei per uscìr di tal miseria, / volentieri accordato a star nel foco, / cangiarmi in Ecco o rinnovare Egeria” (*Piato*, VIII, 152-154). It is possible that the sickness of Arcigrandone and, consequently, of the new world inside him is due to the giant being affected by syphilis, the venereal disease long believed to have originated in the New World. Showing that Arcigrandone is cursed with such a malady will help us to show, first of all, that the new world where Bronzino meets the pygmies can be identified as the New World.

Bronzino was particularly interested in medicine and anatomical pathology, as attested by his attendance at the autopsy of conjoined twins at the Orti Oricellari reported by Varchi.<sup>35</sup> His attention to anatomy is visible in some of his paintings, such as the peeled foot of Saint Bartholomew in the homonym portrait (1555, fig. 93), and it is possible that his medical knowledge was as a result of his friendship with famous physicians of the time, such as Francesco Montevarchi and Alessandro Menchi (Barzman, 2000: 30; Montemagno Ciseri,

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<sup>35</sup> “Quanti sono in questo luogo, che si ricordano d’haver veduto quel Mostro, che nacque dalla porta al Prato, circa dodici anni sono, il quale fu ritratto egregiamente dallo eccellentissimo Bronzino” (Varchi, 1560: 104). The drawing is now lost (Belloni, 1950: 7-8).

2007: 306). As syphilis was one of the most famous plagues of the Sixteenth Century, it is highly probable that the poet had knowledge and, possibly, medical interest in it. According to numerous scholars such as John Frederick Conway (1986), Margaret Healy (1997) and Christopher Cook (2010), Bronzino would have been very familiar with the symptoms of syphilis as he depicted a very detailed personification of this disease in his painting *Venus, Cupid and Time (Allegory of Lust)* (circa 1545, fig. 94). The dark figure on the right side of Venus and Cupid, usually identified as Jealousy, presents evident symptoms of syphilis that the scholars accurately listed according to the perception and the cure of this disease in the Sixteenth Century (fig. 95). It is interesting that these symptoms can be also recognised in the physical description of Arcigrandone in the *Piato*: the giant has an ingrown nail (“l’ugna discesa s’incarnava nel dito” III, 109-110; “carnuta ripa dell’ugna” IV, 100-101) as the personification of Syphilis in the painting suggesting a syphilitic onychia; he has sunken and reddened eyes (“gli occhi soffornati, / e le luci di gufo”, VII, 53-54) as well as pustules and warts all over the body (“non vo’ lasciar di dir, ch’egli era pieno / di cossi e porri, e di cipolle e funghi”, VII, 74-75) typical of syphilis. His sparse beard (“avea la barba ch’un mezzo grembiule / logoro mi pareva con fila rade”, VII, 66-67) suggests patchy syphilitic alopecia; his hollow and dark cheeks (“le guancie due scarselle mi parieno [...] / D’un color proprio del secco terreno”, VII, 76, 79) could refer to syphilitic rupia. Above all, Arcigrandone presents dark lips provoked by the hot pack made with mercury mixed with black wine or vinegar “Non eran di color vermiglio o rossi, / ma di panno di vin nero o d’aceto, / che pagonazzo sbiancato dir puossi” (*Piato*, VII, 58-60). This technique was amply used in the Renaissance period to treat syphilis, as attested by the physician Tommaso Bovio, and reported by Piero



Gambaccini (2004: 118) and Kevin Brown (2007) in their investigation of early modern medicaments.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to these physical signs of the disease visible on Arcigrandone's body, Bronzino also indicated the origins and causes of the pox recognisable in the giant's internal organs. In Girolamo Fracastoro's *Syphilis sive morbus gallicus* (1530), the origin of this pestilence was indicated in the corruption of the air "qui nobis se se insinuat per corpora ubique" [which infiltrates everywhere through our bodies] (*Syphilis sive morbus gallicus*, I, 124; translation in Fracastoro, 1984: 45).<sup>37</sup> The miasma that prevents Bronzino from properly breathing in Arcigrandone's body can be considered the polluted air of the pox that soon infected the entire world. The giant can be, indeed, considered an allegory of the world, as indicated in Bronzino's *In lode della galea*: "Questo corpaccio che mondo è chiamato / pel suo disordinar sempre si trova / in qualche parte corrotto e malato" (*In lode della galea*, II, 31-33). The syphilis attacking the entire body of the giant, from his toenail to his hair, suggests the alarming spread of this disease all over the world. The inside body of Arcigrandone where syphilis originated can therefore be considered an allegory of the New World, perceived at the time as the evil place where such a curse was created. Fracastoro indicated that syphilis originated in the New World, and from there the disease spread everywhere: "Oceano tamen in magno sub sole cadente, / qua misera inventum nuper gens accolit orbem, / passim oritur, nullisque locis non cognita vulgo est" ["Yet in the great ocean beneath the setting sun, where an unhappy race inhabits a world lately discovered [the New World], it arises everywhere and there is not a place where it is not commonly known"] (*Syphilis sive morbus gallicus*, I, 109-111; translation in Fracastoro, 1984: 43). The

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<sup>36</sup> In Fracastoro's *Syphilis sive morbus gallicus* the poet dedicated a long mythological digression to the use of mercury as a remedy to syphilis (II, 270-458).

<sup>37</sup> For the corruption of air as origin of the syphilis in Fracastoro see Iommi Echeverría (2010).

Columbian theory was very popular during the Sixteenth Century: historians such as Oviedo and Díaz de la Isla claimed that syphilis was imported to Europe by Columbus's crew, who contracted the disease during their stay in the Americas (Magner, 2005: 177; Lindemann, 2010: 69). The causes were indicated in the sinful behaviours of Native Americans, who used to practise acts such as cannibalism and sodomy. Some surgeons such as Leonardo Fioravanti believed that syphilis was caused by cannibalism (Eamon, 1998); while others considered it a consequence of anal sex so much so that those affected by this disease were automatically investigated for the crime of sodomy (Hewlett, 2005). In general, the stereotypes about Native Americans were used to blame the New World for the import of such a devastating epidemic into Europe. As such, it is not surprising that Bronzino described Arcigrandone as practising the two Native American acts believed to cause syphilis: cannibalism and sodomy. As for his cannibalistic nature, Bronzino discovers human remains floating in the giant's stomach: "Io vedeva or un braccio, or un ginocchio / venire a proda, ed un quasi smaltito / diventar com'un gambo di finocchio" (*Piato*, VIII, 136-138). As for the homosexual behaviour of the giant, there are different elements indicating Arcigrandone as devoted to non-conventional sexual relationships. First of all, the giant is naked. If Columbus considered bareness a sign of the innocence and goodness of the American populations, in mid-Sixteenth Century the nudity of the savages in both sexes was perceived as impure and even dangerous (Bellini, 1987: 183; Roark, 2003: 9; Allen, 2009: 150-152). Nakedness was associated with sexual promiscuity, denoting the negative idea of nudity and its perception as a vehicle of immorality and perversion. The diffusion in Europe of syphilis contributed to the identification of nudity with promiscuity, sodomy and other practices considered sinful. Fracastoro claimed, in fact, that the nude body was perceived as dangerous because the disease was "fædis enata pudendis" [born amid squalor in the body's shameful parts] (*Syphilis sive morbus gallicus*, I, 330;

translation in Fracastoro, 1984: 55). However, if nudity cannot be considered a strong element to identify Arcigrandone as a sodomite, Arcigrandone's homosexual behaviour is more explicitly testified by the fistula "che scendeva all'osso sacro" (*Piata*, VIII, 207) that Bronzino used to exit the giant's body. Sacral fistulas, known as *fistula-in-ano*, were considered by early modern physicians as a result of homosexual activities, as reported by Pierre Bayle referring to the anal fistula that the Medici Pope Leo X suffered from: "Rien ne contribua davantage à l'élever à la papauté, que less blessures qu'il avait reçues dans les combats vénériens" [Nothing contributed more to his elevation to the papacy, than the wounds he had earlier received in Venerean combat] (Bayle: 1820-1824, IX: 145; translation in Wyatt, 2004: 35). Francesco Guicciardini (*Storia d'Italia*, XVI, 12) and Paolo Giovio (*In vitam Leoni decimi*, 1987: 95) made explicit allusions to the homosexual activities of Leo X, suggesting that the fistula was considered a clear sign of his sin.<sup>38</sup>

The giant's anal fistula places Arcigrandone between the New World giants devoted to sodomitical practises to whom numerous historians of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries referred. Nicolas Balutet (2007) lists twelve early modern authors who claimed the presence of sodomitical giants in the New World, such as Pedro Cieza de León and Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas.<sup>39</sup> According to these historians, New World giants were initiated to these sinful practices because of the lack of giantesses, or for the inability of their women to satisfy them sufficiently. The homosexual pleasure was soon after adopted by the Native

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<sup>38</sup> "[C]redettesi per molti, nel primo tempo del pontificato, che e' fusse castissimo; ma si scoperse poi dedito eccessivamente, e ogni dí piú senza vergogna, in quegli piaceri che con onestà non si possono nominare" (Guicciardini, XVI, 12). "Non caruit etiam infamia, quod parum honeste nonnullos e cubiculariis (errant enim e tota Italia nobilissimi) adamare, et cum his tenerius atque libere iocari videretur" [the pope did not escape the accusation of infamy, for the love he showed several of his chamberlains smacked of scandal in its playful liberality]. (Giovio, 1987: 95; translation in Wyatt, 2004: 37).

<sup>39</sup> For the complete list see Balutet (2007: 64-65).

Americans living in the giants' same regions, developing quickly in the entire American continent. This idea of the giants as initiators of the New World inhabitants to homosexual practices is also present in the *Piata* because, as suggested by Petrucci Nardelli (1988: 403) and Parker (1997: 1038-1040), the inhabitants of Arcigrandone's New World microcosm also experience such type of same-sex relationships. The scholars refer to these acts as a pun on the homosexual intercourses famous in Florentine society, and a contribution to a popular theme of the burlesque production. My belief though is that Bronzino is giving in this specific passage a negative image of homoerotic interactions, linking them to the sinful behaviour of Native Americans. The inhabitants of Arcigrandone's body experienced an exchange of sexual roles as they "a l'un l'altro il sangue preme e succia" (*Piata*, VIII, 108), where "succiare" indicates the action of assuming a passive role in same sex encounters, as indicated by Jean Toscan (1981, III: 1215). This idea of reciprocity ("a l'un l'altro") was not accepted in mid-Sixteenth-Century Florence, where the distinction between sexual roles was well-defined. Young men were destined to be passive in Socratic relationships, while seniors were always the *agens*, so that the sexual interactions were rigidly structured by age. In his *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence*, Michael Rocke clearly states that the exchange of roles in Florence was seen with horror, and even disgust (1996: 95). Therefore, it is possible that Bronzino was referring here to the homosexual relationships between Native Americans that shocked the Europeans not for the act itself, but for their sexual freedom unrestrained by codes of comportment.<sup>40</sup> The body of the cannibalistic and sodomitic giant corrupted by syphilis is an allegory of the newly discovered lands, where giants were born according to the fellows of the Accademia Fiorentina as Serafini. Arcigrandone can therefore be identified as one of the Peruvian giants

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<sup>40</sup> On the European perception of the American homosexuality see in particular Mérida Jiménez (2007); Tortorici (2012).

described in the *Gigantea* and in the *Nanea*, and his interior body considered an allegory of the New World from which syphilis originated.

During his journey in the New World represented by Arcigrandone's body, Bronzino met the pygmies/dwarves that were encircling the 'gran donna'. They are not referred to as neither pygmies nor dwarves, but as "minors": their dwarfish nature is, however, confirmed by the fact that the character Bronzino is forced to lower his gaze in order to see them ("tanto che per mirar l'occhio s'inchina", VIII, 84). These "minors" are also associated with little fishes, snails, crabs, turtle doves, partridges and she-goats (*Piato*, VIII, 113-116), all the small animals to whom pygmies were usually correlated with that allow us to identify them also as pygmies. As in the case of the *Nanea*, they can be considered as part of the New World collection of Cosimo, constituting part of the microcosm that the duke aimed to reproduce in his *Kunstkammer*. Given the corrupted features of the New World described in the *Piato*, it is possible that they were used as a means to communicate Bronzino's discomfort at being a courtier at the Medici service. To understand this point it is crucial to determine the identity of the "gran donna", that in the poem is encircled by these minors. I will dedicate now some attention to the identity of this figure, as she will give us insights about the identity of the pygmies/dwarves described in the poem.

The "gran donna" has been compared by Parker to Ariosto's Alcina and Folengo's Gulfora. The scholar attributed to her different allegorical interpretations: "the two-faced nature of power and wealth; the hidden evils of power, position and wealth; the bestiality of the powerful; or the fickleness of society" (2000: 150). She has however been interpreted only as a metaphorical figure, whilst I shall suggest a more tangible interpretation of her. Let us read the verses describing this woman in the *Piato*:

Ed una donna in quel sì bella veggio  
seder, di tanto altera e nobil vista  
ch'ogn'altra a par di lei giudicai peggio.  
In quell'aria sì grossa, e con la vista,  
com'io vi dissi, appannata e 'mpedita,  
e con quel lume, ch'a gran pena acquista,  
mi credea averla più chiara e spedita,  
e veder me' che mai, credenza inferma!  
nè più curava o d'entrata o d'uscita.  
E in quella donna, tenendola ferma,  
com'io v'ho detto, più nobile e bella  
di ciascun'altra il giudizio l'afferma.  
E mirando or la man di ricche anella  
adorna, ed or l'incoronata chioma  
di gran bellezza e di gran pregio appella,  
in veste tale e sì ricca, che Roma  
non potea farla a questa somigliante,  
quando la terra avea più vinta e doma.  
S'io volessi contarvi tutte quante  
le sue delizie e la pompa, che spande,  
queste mie carte non sarebbon tante.  
Tenea la destra in sur un dado grande,  
che di cristallo lucido pareva,  
pari e pulito da tutte le bande.  
Nella sinistra uno scettro teneva  
di gran valuta, e vedev'io ch'in pregio  
più quel quadro cristallo e caro aveva.  
D'intorno a questa un nobile collegio,  
veder mi par, de' più saggi o migliori  
che 'l mondo avesse, e di più chiaro fregio;  
capitani e prelati e signori,  
ogn'un la reverisce, ogn'un l'inchina,  
e se le fanno schiavi e servidori.  
E digradando insino alla meschina  
gente, vi vidi di più sorti e stati;  
tanto che per mirar l'occhio s'inchina.  
E tutti erano accetti e carezzati  
dalla gran donna e da quei degni eroi,  
ch'ella avea 'ntorno e vestiti e cibati.  
S'io avea voglia d'onorarla, a voi  
lascio pensare, e quanto io mi struggea  
d'esser degnato ne' servigi suoi.  
Per farle offerta di me mi pareva  
muovere il passo umilmente e devoto,  
ch'il suo piè, ginocchion, bacciar volea.  
O mia falsa credenza! Ecco ch'io noto,  
quand'io lo vo' bacciar, ch'egli era tutto  
nero e peloso e d'ogni grazia voto.

Se ben di forma umana, era sì brutto  
che, schifandolo, a me ritirai presto  
le labbra e 'l viso sbigottito in tutto.  
E com'io l'alzo, io veggo tutto il resto  
corrispondere al piede. Or se m'assaglia  
stupore, io lascio a voi pensarlo questo.  
(*Piato*, VIII, 49-102)

There are different elements in this description that suggest that the “gran donna” could be interpreted as the duchess Eleonora of Toledo, wife of Cosimo I. First of all, Bronzino’s interest in entering in the good graces of this woman can be explained by his role of official portraitist at the Medici court. As reported by Vasari (*Vite*, VI: 233), he was appointed court portraitist in early 1540s (Cox-Rearick, 1993: 94), but his banishment from the Medici-sponsored Accademia Fiorentina in 1547 for ideological and political divergences with the Arameans Gelli and Giambullari put this role at risk.<sup>41</sup> Recent studies about Eleonora have shown the significant role played by the duchess as patron and benefactor in the Florentine milieu (Eisenbichler, 2004; Gaston, 2013: 116-117). Being part of the adoring multitude encircling the “gran donna”, Bronzino was probably trying to maintain or strengthen his role at the Medici court by flattering his patron.

At the same time, the negative perception that Bronzino had of both Eleonora and Cosimo has been recently attested. If it is true, how claimed by Massimo Firpo, that Bronzino was “lungi dal far sentire qualche pur flebile protesta” (2010: 92), recent scholarship recognised in his puns and allegories a tool to silently express his impatience towards his patrons. Sheila Barker suggests, for example, that Eleonora and the Medici were associated with mosquitos and plague in Bronzino’s portrait of Eleonora with her son Giovanni (c. 1545,

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<sup>41</sup> Gelli and Giambullari formally accused Bronzino and other artists of not taking part in the activities promoted by the Accademia. See Plaisance, 2004: 186; Gaston, 2013: 113.

fig. 96)<sup>42</sup>; and Carla Chiummo highlights how the painter's discontent for the Medici family can be recognised in numerous sections of his poetic production, in particular in the *Saltarelli dell'abbruccia sopra i mattaccini di ser Fedocco* (1560-1561) and in the *Canzoniere*.<sup>43</sup> In the *capitolo* titled *In lode della zanzara*, the poet subtly compares the mosquitos to the Medici, ironically thanking them for not letting him ever rest. Bronzino claims in this *capitolo* that “i medici [...] / hanno imparato a trar sangue da quelle [dalle zanzare]” (*In lode della zanzara*, 87-88, my italics), possibly referring, as suggested by Barker, to the Medici sucking people's blood with their taxation. In the *Esortazione alle zanzare che se ne vadino*, the poet even invites the mosquito-Medici to leave Florence, using as always a coded vocabulary that would have protected him from any possible accusation of vilification towards his patrons. The description of the ‘gran donna’ revealing herself to be a monkey well explains the dichotomy of the courtesan condition, with the painter obligated to please a patron who does not share his own ideology. In the *Biasimo*, Bronzino explicitly denounced such condition, claiming that “le moine, ’l piaggiar, le beffe e ’l danno / son quelle che ci fanno, e ch’alla fine / c’empion d’ingiustizia, falsitade e ’nganno” (*Biasimo*, 183-185).

The richness of the gran donna's dresses and jewellery is another detail that can link the woman described in the *Piato* to Eleonora. Scholars such as Giovanna Lazzi (1988) and Roberta Orsi Landini (1993, 2005) have shown how the duchess's precious garments were symbols of her legacy as duchess of Tuscany. This is particularly relevant in the portraits of

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<sup>42</sup> Barker, S., *Pearls, Prunes and Malaria: Behind the Scenes of Bronzino's Double Portrait of Eleonora di Toledo and Giovanni de' Medici*, lecture given at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, as part of the exhibition *The Drawings of Bronzino*, January 20th, 2010 - April 18th, 2010. The video of the talk is available on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KN32FYkBX5o>

<sup>43</sup> Chiummo, C., *Bronzino e l'Accademia Fiorentina*, talk given at The First Intellectual Networks of Early Modern Europe conference, London, British Library, 17-18 September 2011. The audio registration of this talk is available on <http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2012/09/carla-chiummo-bronzino-e-l%E2%80%99accademia-fiorentina/> See also Chiummo (2009).



Eleonora made by Bronzino, where the duchess's notorious attachment to pearls and brocade dresses was used as an instrument of the Medici propaganda (Thomas, 1994: 265; Marsoleck, 2013: paper 24). It is exactly in one of these portraits that we can recognise the image of the "gran donna" described by the poet. In the *Portrait of Leonor Álvarez de Toledo* that Bronzino depicted in 1543, the duchess is indeed represented wearing on her right hand a big point-cut crystal ring with a square stone, the "dado grande, / che di cristallo lucido pareva, / pari e pulito da tutte le bande" worn by the "gran donna" (fig. 97). This painting has been considered by scholars as the prototype of the state portraiture of the duchess, used as a model for further paintings (Brock, 2002: 81; Langdon, 2006: 65). The image provided by Bronzino of Eleonora was publically used as a symbol of Medici self-fashioning, and the wedding ring considered as a token of Eleonora's status and power. As for the sceptre held by the "gran donna", we should consider that Eleonora has been often represented as a crowned Juno holding a sceptre, in order to communicate an image of fecundity and prosperity.<sup>44</sup> Examples are Francesco Salviati's *Triumph of Camillus* (1545) in the Sala delle Udienze of the Palazzo Vecchio, where Eleonora is associated with the statue of the goddess (fig. 98); and Bartolomeo Ammannati's Juno fountain designed in 1555 for the Sala Grande, where Eleonora appears seated upon the marble rainbow (Campbell, 1983, III: 821-824; fig. 99). Juno's sceptre was such an important distinctive feature of the duchess that she was designated with the Virgilian motto *Tu scepra Iovemque concilias* ("you make power and Jupiter's patronage") (Edelstein, 2004: 71; translation in Conington, 1863: 40), indicating the

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<sup>44</sup> Eleonora was identified with Juno as early as 1539, in the decorations of the courtyard in the Palazzo Vecchio where the wedding banquet of the ducal couple took place (Cox-Rearick, 1993: 31). Bronzino defined Eleonora "casta Giunon di Leonora" in her epitaph (1823: 41). Vasari explained clearly the identification of the duchess with Juno to Francesco de' Medici: "Vostra Eccellenza sa che di Opi e di Saturno nasce Giove e Giunone, qual fu sorella e moglie di Giove, applicando ciò alli animi conformi del duca signor vostro padre, e della illustrissima signora duchessa madre vostra, la quale certamente come Giunone, dea dell'aria, delle ricchezze, e de' regni, e de' matrimoni" (*Vite*, 8:73). On the identification Eleonora/Juno see in particular Edelstein (2004); Cox-Rearick (2004).

authority of the duchess not only on her people, but on Cosimo/Jupiter himself. Readers of the *Piato* could have probably recognised in the lady surrounded by “capitani e prelati e signori”, holding a sceptre and wearing Eleonora’s distinguished ring as the duchess of Tuscany.

We shall now come back at the dwarves/pygmies encircling the “gran donna”. Identifying the woman as Eleonora of Toledo, it is possible to identify these minors with the court dwarves that had such an important role in the Medici entourage. As Bitonto in the *Nanea*, these minors are, in fact, “carezzati”, a verb that explicitly identifies them as dwarves for their association with pet animals. They are also dressed up and fed by the “gran donna”, activities that we know from numerous sources that the duchess personally carried out. Letters of the ducal secretary Lorenzo Pagni to Cosimo’s major-domo Pier Francesco Riccio show, for example, that Eleonora was responsible for taking care of the court dwarves, providing tailored clothes for them: “Dice la S.ra mia Duchessa che la S. V. facci fare dua giubboni di seta bianca et dua para di calze bianche per Lodovico et Filippino nani et che le mandi quanto prima può”; “Manda anco la S.ra Duchessa che la S. V. facci vestire Navarro, Franceschillo et Moralicco con calze et saioni di panno tanè et berettini con la baviera da serrar la faccia, pure di colore tanè et giubboni di tela con bambagie”.<sup>45</sup> Also, in the tapestry *Joseph in Prison and Pharaoh’s Banquet* (1546) designed by Bronzino and woven by Jan Rost, the pharaoh’s wife has been identified as Eleonora by art scholars due to her elaborate blond coiffure, and the type of pearls and jewels that the duchess used to wear in official portraits (Forti Grazzini, 1994, I: 32; Edelstein, 2001: 237; fig. 100).<sup>46</sup> In this tapestry, Eleonora is represented by

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<sup>45</sup> ASF Med. Princ. 1170, insert 5, f. 262, 10<sup>th</sup> June 1543; ASF Med. Princ. 1170, insert 7, f. 378, 4<sup>th</sup> November 1543. In a letter from Francesco Ferrini to Pier Francesco Ricci, Eleonora di Toledo orders “dua o 3 chamicie per Filipino” ASF Med. Princ. 1170a, insert 3, f. 68, 16<sup>th</sup> August 1545. Eleonora had also a personal dwarf, Maria Nana: ASF, *Acquisti e doni*, filza 1, insert 11, “Ruolo della corte del Duca Cosimo primo di Fiorenza” (Guerzoni, 2013: 586).

<sup>46</sup> In the tapestry the pharaoh has been identified with Cosimo I and the bold man advising him as the Aramean Gelli (Cox-Rearick, 1993: 324).

Bronzino in the act of feeding a dwarf, a detail that on one side strengthens the identification of the “gran donna” with the duchess, and on the other confirms the identification of the minors with court dwarves. As in the *Nanea*, the dwarves can be interpreted as an allegory of the Arameans, but this time they are not victorious. In the *Piato* they are in fact defeated by “animai più possenti e più feroci” (*Piato*, VIII, 119) that cruelly bite and scratch them.<sup>47</sup> As shown by Leatrice Mendelsonh (2014), Bronzino used Andrea Alciati’s *Book of Emblems* (1531) amply in his production, and in this book pygmies are associated to “eos qui supra vires quicquam audent” [those who dare to go beyond their powers] (fig. 101).<sup>48</sup> It is possible, therefore, that the pygmies’ defeat in Arcigrandone’s body is a reference to the status the Arameans thought they had achieved at the Medici court; a position, however, that is illusory for the poet. In the *Piato* Juno/Eleonora is in fact transformed into a monkey; and Jupiter/Cosimo is too far away to hear the pleas of the pygmies/Arameans: “Né lor giovava al cielo alzar le voci, / che Giove molte volte non gl’udiva, / tant’era in alto o vedea le lor croci” (*Piato*, VIII, 121-123).

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<sup>47</sup> These “animai più possenti e più feroci” (*Piato*, VIII, 119) could perhaps represent the circle of the Jesuits that Eleonora warmly supported from 1547. The duchess established personal relationship with leading Jesuits such as Diego Laínez and Diego de Guzmán, and she promoted the opening of a Jesuit college in Florence. It is possible that the predatory beasts that were more successful in obtain the approval of the duchess were, in fact, the Jesuits, who were considered personal property of Eleonora. In a letter to Father Elpidio Ugoletti, Ignatius of Loyola wrote that “los scholares son cosa de su Ex.tia, como lo es toda la Compañía” (“the scholars belong to the duchess, as well as all the Society of Jesus”), in *Monumenta Ignatiana*, 3, 639, let. 2048, 1<sup>st</sup> September 1551 (Franceschini, 2004: 190, translation is mine).

<sup>48</sup> “Dum dormit, dulci recreat dum corpora somno, / Sub picea & clavam caeteraque arma tenet. / Alcycen pygmea manus prosternere laetho, / Posse putat, vires non bene docta suas. / Excitus ipse velut pulices, sic proterit hostem, / Et saevi implicitum pelle leonis agit” [When Alcides (Hercules) is sleeping, and while he is refreshing his body in sweet sleep beneath a pine-tree and has near him his club and other weapons, a troop of Pygmies believe that they can overcome him – but without recognising the limits of their powers. When he awakens, he crushes his enemies like fleas and carries them off, caught in the skin of the fierce lion]. Translation in Alciati, 2007: 77. The episode of the pygmies attacking the sleeping Hercules is in Philostratus, *Eikones*, 2:22, as indicated in Seigneuret, 1988, I: 416.

Positioning Eleonora and her courtiers in Arcigrandone's sick and noxious body, Bronzino possibly indicates the degradation of the Medici household, attributing the same negative behaviour to the court that the Native Americans were accused of. Bronzino used the New World theme to make the Medici court appear as a neglected and savage place, representing both the corporeal and spiritual corruption to which the Medici court was exposed. The choice of the New World to indicate this condition is helped by the passion that both Cosimo and Eleonora showed for New World artefacts. If we have already pointed out the attention that the duke had for the items preserved in his *Kunstammer*, it is possible to claim that Eleonora di Toledo was no less fascinated than her husband in New World items. The pearls that the duchess wears in almost all her portraits were imported from overseas, as well as other items she was interested in such as wool, leather and pearl dust.<sup>49</sup> She also ordered the plantation of maize at Castello, and the rearing of ninety-four American turkey nestlings in Poggio a Caiano.<sup>50</sup> In a letter to Ercole II d'Este, Eleonora even thanks the duke of Ferrara for having sent her some "asinini indiani", that could be llamas.<sup>51</sup> Elements

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<sup>49</sup> In a letter to Eleonora di Toledo, Bernardo Alberti informs the duchess of the arrive of two ships at the port of Livorno coming from Cadiz loaden with New World items she could have been interested in: "Questo giorno sono adrivati in questo porto due nave grosse una la characcha Santa Maria di Rodi padrone frate Francesco Giron, laltra la nave Trinita d'Antonio Preve chariche tutte in Chalix di grossa somma di lane, pepi, zucheri, chuoia d'India, perle e polvere di perle, fardelli di grana e cordohani, chase di conserve e guardamazili, e più altre mercie per a merchanti spagniuoli e fiorentini e lucchesi et perché è nostro solito darne adviso dello adrivo loro non vogliamo manchare". ASF Med. Princ. 653, ins. 13, f. 360, 10th June 1543.

<sup>50</sup> "La Sig.ra Duchessa mi ha comandato che io scriva alla S. V. che lei faccia seminare quel grano indiano, il quale ho dato al corriero che lo consegna alla S. V.". ASF Med. Princ. 1170a ins. 3, f. 249. Letter from Giovanni Francesco Lottini to Pier Francesco Riccio, 21st November 1545. "Ché quando li Signori Patroni vennano al Poggio che andorono al barcho ci trovavamo da 94 pulcini di India di più covate drieto a sette chiocchie". ASF Med. Princ. 1174, ins. 3, f. 29. Letter from Jacopo da Portico to Pier Francesco Riccio, 13th June 1548. About the raise of turkeys by the Medici we should also consider that the statue of a turkey was sculpted in the grotto at Castello for Cosimo I (Lazzaro, 1995: 511). Heikamp (1976: 459-460) highlighted that the entire grotto was decorated with pre-Columbian masks.

<sup>51</sup> ASF Med. Princ. 1, f. 54. 17th June 1550. On the possible identification of the "asinini indiani" with llamas see the discussion on the Medici Archive Project website [bia.medici.org](http://bia.medici.org). On the presence of

indicating the New World even appear in some of the works commissioned to Bronzino by the ducal couple. Examples are the turkey appearing in the *Great Abundance* tapestry designed in 1545 (fig. 102 and 103), the Mexican coral worn by Giovanni de' Medici in his portrait as a child (ca. 1545, fig. 104), and the soursop native of Central and South America present in Felicitas's cornucopia in the *Allegory of Happiness* (1564, fig. 105).<sup>52</sup> The poet seems to disapprove of his patrons, highlighting how their passion for the exotic would have conducted Florence to experience devilish events such as syphilis and moral corruption. Contrary to Serafini, who supported the 'potential' of the New World, Bronzino considered it a place of corruption and sickness, suggesting a correlation between 'curiosity' and 'danger' that has been amply investigated by Williams (2006). In his poem *Della prigione*, where he echoes Ariosto's third *Satira* about the aversion for travelling, Bronzino even limited the items present in the New World to "qualche sasso e qualche frutto" (*Della prigione*, 102), wondering what makes them so appealing for his contemporaries.<sup>53</sup> In addition, in the *Esortazione alle zanzare che se ne vadino* mentioned above, Bronzino subtly expresses his

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New World animals in the Medici menagerie see the letter sent by Pompeo Zambecari to Cosimo I de' Medici where the nuntius apostolicus in Portugal refers to exotic animals sent to Florence from Lisboa: "Poiche a V. Ecc.a piacque, farmi favore, de pigliarsi gli Animali che l'anno passato pe'l mio mandavo per Italia, ho giudicato per simil'meggio, poter con lei pigliar' ardire di far' degna la presente tavola con un'scachieri di matreperle, lavorate al modo d'India, et venute di quelle parti, che con l'occasione di questa nave venetiana, con la qual mando cert'altre mia cosucce". ASF Med. Princ. 418a, f. 1216. March 1553. The presence of llamas in the Medici menagerie is proved by the fact that one of these animals was sent by Cosimo as a gift to Albrecht V, duke of Bavaria (Heikamp, 1972: 11; Cipriani, 1992: 232).

<sup>52</sup> In a letter by Francesco de' Medici to the naturalist Ulisse Aldrovandi the duke claims that soursops were part of his father's botanical collection: "Sono più anni, mentre che viveva il Gran Duca Cosimo mio signore et padrone che é fu portato uno di quei frutti del Guanabano". ASF Med. Princ. 269, f. 18. 7<sup>th</sup> April 1586.

<sup>53</sup> "Or, s'io mi posso star nella mia terra / in un mio luogo rinchiuso, e ch'io posso / veder, pensando, il ciel tutto e la terra, / che bisogn' è che di qui mi sie mosso, / s'io ho veduto già Montemorello / Pian di Legnania, e Arno scemo e grosso, / e querce, abeti e pini? Or col cervello non poss'io far mill'Atlanti e mille / selve, e mill'Ocean' maggior di quello? / Possomi immaginar cittadi e ville, e laghi e bulicami e mongibelli / e mille mostri e chimere e sibille, / e veder la fortuna co' capelli / di dietro, e 'l sol di fumo, e ch'i corrieri / volin per l'aria e per terra gl'uccelli" (*Della prigione*, 103-117). On Bronzino's tribute to Ariosto see Rossi (2010: 193n.).

desire to see his patrons moving away from Florence to the New World that they appreciate so much: “Ma ancor vorrei, ch’in luoghi più lontani / andaste, e volend’ire al nuovo mondo, / v’ajuterei co’ piedi e con le mani” (*Esortazione*, 196-198).

In the *Piato*, the minors encircling the ‘gran donna’ in Arcigrandone’s body can be seen as a mirror of the court dwarves encircling Eleonora in the Medici court. The association of these court dwarves with the Arameans allow considering the poem under a political prospective, whilst the interpretation of Arcigrandone’s body as the New World provides the key to interpret the context in which to read these lines. The same allegorical scheme adopted by Bronzino in the *Piato* could be recognised in the painting of the court dwarf Morgante that Bronzino depicted under commission of Cosimo in 1552. In the *Morgante nano*, Morgante is the most famous dwarf of the Medici court; and he is surrounded, as we will see, by New World elements possibly indicating him as a sodomite. The New World is once again used by Bronzino as a tool to interpret the reality that he aims to describe: as in the *Piato* Arcigrandone’s body is depicted as the New World inhabited by populations devoted to cannibalism and sodomy, in *Morgante nano* the dwarf becomes bearer of immoral practices as the Native Americans. The accusation of sodomy should not be, however, referred to the dwarf himself, but to the Arameans that the dwarf represents. Morgante could be in particular considered a parodic personification of Giovan Battista Gelli, aimed to be a subtle pun for Cosimo who supported the Aramean group. Being part of Cosimo’s *Wunderkammern* due to its collectability both as a dwarf and as a painting, Morgante could be interpreted as an emblem of Cosimo himself.

### *Naturalia, exotica and artefacta: Morgante*

*Morgante nano* (fig. 89) has been the subject of numerous studies and interpretations, but none of these studies have considered it as a reference to the pygmies believed to live in the New World, or to Native Americans. From a formal point of view, the painting represents Morgante hunting birds, an activity to which court dwarves seem to be particularly devoted, as attested in a letter from Lorenzo Pagni to Pier Francesco Riccio: “Il Duca [...] questa sera è stato nel giardino più d' un' hora, dove il Nano, avendo teso i panioni a quelli bossi del laberinto di fuori, et havendo messoli appresso la sua civetta ha preso sei o otto uccellini con gran piacere di S. Ex.a, ma molto maggiore delli S.ri Don Francesco et Donna Maria”.<sup>54</sup> From a rhetorical point of view, the painting is famous for being a response to Varchi's *inchiesta* into the merits of sculpture versus painting, to which Bronzino wished to demonstrate the superiority of painting (Holderbaum, 1956). The two-sided portrait of Morgante allows the viewer to experience a comprehensive pan of the dwarf, or even, as suggested by Robin O' Bryan (2012: 265), to visualise Morgante's process of aging. From a stylistic point of view, Morgante is treated as an anatomical object of enquiry, while from a propagandistic point of view it was supposed to represent Cosimo's kindness and dignity as a benefactor (Cox-Rearick, 2002). I will add a new interpretation to existing scholarship by showing how Morgante can be also considered a New World pygmy, and a counterpart of Arcigrandone. As the giant in the *Piato*, Morgante is used by Bronzino to describe the Medici court taking advantage of the interest of Cosimo in the West Indies.

Formally, Bronzino's Morgante is a dwarf. While Medici artists such as Giambologna and Cioli represented Morgante as a pygmy riding sea-snails and turtles (fig. 91 and 92),

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<sup>54</sup> ASF., MP, 1171, insert 3, f. 147. Letter dated 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1544 (Heikamp, 2006: 287).

Bronzino presented him in his real nature of a dwarf.<sup>55</sup> Considering the dimensions of the canvas and the average stature of achondroplastic dwarves, dysmorphology expert David W. Smith (1976: 188) suggested that Morgante was depicted life size, his height would have been around  $131 \pm 5.6$  cm (quoted in Ghadessi, 2007: 102). The birds in the paintings help the viewer to realistically imagine the proportions of the dwarf: contrary to the pygmies in the *Nanea*, who used to ride birds, Morgante is able to carry them on his own shoulders. In which terms can we say, then, that Morgante can be interpreted as a New World pygmy and be somehow related to the Americas?

First of all, we shall consider that the dwarf is naked. His nudity has been interpreted by scholars in a variety of different ways: a “*capriccio pittorico*” (Campione, 2011: 30), a way to exalt the dwarf’s distinctive deficiencies (O’Byran, 2012: 264), a result of Bronzino’s anatomical interest (Tietze-Conrat, 1957: 90), and a contrast with Cosimo’s perfect nude body in the depiction of *Duke Cosimo I de’ Medici as Orpheus* by Bronzino (Collareta, 2010: 196), to name but a few. However, Morgante is not only naked but he is also surrounded by “birds”, a detail that suggests his lascivious nature. The word ‘bird’ (*uccello*) was used in the Italian poetic production as a popular metaphor to designate the penis. In the *Nanea*, the New World pygmies ride ‘birds’ implying the homosexual conduct of the Armeans. In the *Piata* the New World giant Arcigrandone, accused of being a sodomite, is surrounded by ‘birds’ *penetrating* his body: “io vidi più di mille al varco / entrare uccel di più sorte adunati / da ogni banda; e

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<sup>55</sup> To be precise, Cioli’s *Morgante* can be considered either as a dwarf or a pygmy, depending on our interpretation of the tortoise he is riding. If we consider the tortoise to be normal sized, then Morgante is a pygmy, as well as the two pygmies riding a snail and an owl carved by Cioli located in the Medici villa at Careggi (fig. 85 and 86). If we instead consider it to be one of the giant-sized tortoises imported into Florence from the East and West Indies, then Morgante can be considered as a dwarf. As Horst Bredekamp (1989) has suggested that a similar giant tortoise in the Gardens of Bomarzo symbolises Central America, the tortoise in the Boboli garden can even be interpreted as another symbol of the New World at the Medici court. We should consider that a tortoise with a sail on its carapace was indeed the emblem of Cosimo, together with the motto *Festina lente* [make haste slowly] already adopted by Charles V.



son nel mio dir parco” (*Piato*, VII, 97-99). Even more explicitly, Morgante is specifically accompanied by owls that, as shown by Rocke (1996: 109, 223) and Parker (2000: 157), are a clear sexual innuendo indicating sodomy in the burlesque production. As such, the dwarf painted by Bronzino can be easily associated with his poetic counterparts of American origin: the New World pygmies described by Serafini in the *Nanea*, and the sodomite New World giant Arcigrandone in the *Piato*.

Secondly, we shall bear in mind the standard visual formulae used in the early modern period to represent Native Americans. Morgante seems perfectly match this imagery. Starting from the end of the Fifteenth Century, Indigenous people were represented naked, surrounded by birds, wearing feather headdresses and linked to immoral elements. One of the most indicative examples of this trend is the recently discovered scene representing New World people in the *Resurrection of Christ* fresco (ca. 1494) painted by Pinturicchio in the Vatican’s Apostolic Palace (Borgia apartments) (Paolucci, 2013: 5; fig. 106). Here male Natives are naked, dancing and touching each other in a way that could insinuate their promiscuity, and wearing feather headdresses. It is possible to find elements of similarities between these indigenous people and the representation of Morgante. As for New World people, Morgante’s nudity could communicate the promiscuity to which the dwarf was exposed, indicated by his backside being prominently displayed, with both an erotic and grotesque connotation. The birds surrounding him can be linked to the feather headdresses worn by the indigenous people in Pinturicchio’s fresco that, as attested by Max Carocci, indicate in European eyes the sexual ambiguity of Native Americans (2013: 71).<sup>56</sup> However, the elements that most seems to link Morgante with the New World scenario are the moths used to cover the dwarf’s genitalia. In the Sixteenth Century moths were considered an allegory of the homosexual behaviour

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<sup>56</sup> On the negative connotation of the feather headdresses see also Mellinkoff (1985).

between Native Americans, as indicated by Fray Pedro de León in his *Compendio*. Native Americans were at the time burnt for their sinful behaviour, and as such linked to the moths that used to hover around the fire:

Al fin vino a parar en el fuego y como suelo decir (y aquel día que lo mataron lo dije), que los que no se enmiendan y se andan en las ocasiones de pecar son como las mariposillas, que andan revoloteando por junto a la lumbre: que de un encuentro se le quema un alilla, y de otro un pedacillo, y de otro se quedan quemadas; así los que tratan de esta mercadería una vez quedan tiznados en sus honras y otra vez chamuscados y, al fin, vienen a parar en el fuego (*Compendio*, Apéndice de los ajusticiados, 480)

At the end they were burnt and as I used to say (and I said in the day they were killed), [sodomites] who do not amend themselves and are driven by the sin are like moths hovering around the fire: at one flight the moth burns a wing, at the second another little piece of its wing, at a third it remains burnt. At the same way people who trade in this type of merchandise once sully their honour, another time they burn themselves, and at the end they end up into the fire (My translation is based on the summary of the case by Federico Garza Carvajal, 2003: 2, 63).

Scholars have usually identified the insects represented in Bronzino's canvas as general butterflies, interpreting them as a reference to the role of dwarves in the Renaissance courts. According to Touba Ghadessi, the butterflies could indicate the collectability of the dwarves, as butterflies and dwarves were both considered popular collectible 'objects' (2007: 81).<sup>57</sup> Tietze-Conrat believed, instead, that the butterflies could refer to Morgante's jester role, as butterflies were depicted with the figure of the fool on Tarot cards (1957: 65-66). These interpretations are both relevant and appropriate, but they fail to fully appreciate the specific species of these insects and its subsequent meaning. A naturalistic analysis of the insects reveals them as nocturnal moths, a species characterised by the dark colour of the wings and curved antennas. As well as the owls resting on Morgante's shoulders, the moths indicate that

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<sup>57</sup> Dwarves were often included in zoological and botanical inventories and catalogued as *mirabilia* at the same level of exotic animals. See for example the Farnese gardens' inventory compiled by Tobia Aldini (1625: 10). On this inventory see Mason (1998: 116).

the scene is set at night, suggesting that Morgante is hunting ‘birds’ in secret, as if it was an illegal activity.<sup>58</sup> The position adopted by one of the moths to cover the dwarf’s genitalia is indicative of the attention the painter aimed to bring to the sexuality sphere, possibly indicating the homosexual practices between Native Americans that, as mentioned before, particularly alarmed the Florentines. The element of the fire associating moths and indigenous sodomites can be spotted in the barren nature of land, unusual for a swampy area such as Tuscany. The two cut logs in the background could even indicate a blaze. Also, the plant growing close to Morgante can be identified as an example of *mirabilis jalap*, also known as “marvel of Peru” and “pretty-by-night”, imported into Europe from the Peruvian Andes in 1540. This plant was cultivated in the Medici botanical gardens, as testified by the Medici botanical illustrator Jacopo Ligozzi who reproduced it (Heikamp: 1972: 65).<sup>59</sup> It can be interpreted as an additional element linking the painting with the New World.

Finally, the identification of Morgante with indigenous people is confirmed by Grazzini, that in his sonnet *In morte di Morgante nano*<sup>60</sup> eulogised the dwarf with the same words used by Matteo Fortini in his *Libro dell’universo* (c. 1514) to describe Native Americans:

“Ma così nuovo e vario,  
aguzzo, e contraffatto, che pare  
gattomammon, bertuccia e babbuino”  
(*In morte di Morgante nano*, 20-22)

“gattimammon’, bertucce e babbüini  
che fan, saltando, addorni que’ valloni;

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<sup>58</sup> As largely shown by Rocke (1996), sodomy was associated with night-time in early modern Florence. The members of the Florentine organization established to root out the practice of same-sex acts were known as ‘Ufficiali di Notte’ [Officers of the Night].

<sup>59</sup> The drawing is in the Gabinetto dei disegni in the Uffizi.

<sup>60</sup> According to Michel Plaisance the sonnet was composed in 1580 (2004: 351), but this date is object of debate as shown by Crimi and Spila, 2006: 61.

quivi non è palazzi né giardini,  
città, castella né altre magioni,  
ma gli àn certe capanne in luoghi forti  
sol per non esser da' nimici morti"  
(*LdU*, VII, 77, 3-8).<sup>61</sup>

As proved by Luciano Formisano, the *Libro dell'universo* was part of Padre Stradino's 'Armadiaccio' (Formisano, 1986: 358), the library of manuscripts assembled by the founder of the Accademia degli Umidi amply discussed by Berta Maracchi Biagiarelli (1982). In one of the numerous sonnets dedicated to Stradino, Grazzini write to have often borrowed manuscripts from the Armadiaccio: "Ma stia pur male, o ben: sia lungi, o presso, / i vostri gran libron sempre ho fra mano. / [...] Chi vuol compor romanzi, / e non si tuffa nel vostro armadiaccio, / riuscirà, cantando, un uccellaccio" (*Rime del Lasca*, CLIV, 5-6; 15-17). Therefore, it is possible that Grazzini had the possibility to read Fortini's octaves about the Americas, describing Morgante as one of the animal-like people met by Vespucci in the New World.

How do these connections with the New World change our interpretation of Bronzino's Morgante? The American theme could have been used by the painter in order to communicate a sense of depravity that would have balanced the comic allure attributed to the painting. Morgante can be considered as a diminishing of Arcigrandone, a dwarf with the name of a giant<sup>62</sup> that can be inserted in the discourse on the corruption of Europe (and of Florence in particular) caused by the discovery of the Americas. The reference to the homosexual acts practiced not by Florentines, but between the immoral Native Americans, is indicative of the negativity Bronzino instils in his work, as already seen in the *Piato*. The homosexual

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<sup>61</sup> The expression was initially used by Pulci in the *Morgante* to indicate the animals collected in Luciana's pavilion (*Morgante*, XIV, 80, 1). Grazzini and Fortini seem to have applied this condition of collectability respectively to Morgante, and the Native Americans.

<sup>62</sup> Morgante was the name of the protagonist giant in Pulci's *Morgante*.

relationships between the members of the Accademia Fiorentina and the pun about homosexuality in burlesque poetry are very popular topics, as shown by Giovanni Dall'Orto (1989) and Lisa Kaborycha.<sup>63</sup> But it is the connection with the New World 'obscene' habits not controlled by moral rules that confers a negative implication to the discourse about homosexuality visually expressed in the painting.<sup>64</sup>

By attributing to Morgante the sexual conduct of indigenous people, Bronzino was possibly trying to silently blame the Arameans who banished him from the Accademia Fiorentina. In order to understand why this could be so, it is important to bear in mind the intellectual climate in which the *Morgante nano* was commissioned. It is very likely that Bronzino had the pygmies straddling owls to reach the "altro polo" in mind (*Nanea*, I, 67, 4), described by Serafini in his poem. These pygmies, as mentioned above, were identified as the Arameans, the group of academicians lead by Gelli and Giambullari and supported by Cosimo. Borrowing from Serafini the identification of the New World pygmies with the Arameans, the painter was possibly identifying Morgante with his opponents. This would allow us to claim that the accusation of sodomy of which the dwarf was accused in the painting should be addressed not to the dwarf himself, as claimed by Parker (2000: 158), but to the group of the Arameans that Morgante represents. The pun about sodomy was often used by Bronzino in his burlesque production as a joke with his friends, but in this case the connection with the New World makes it a subtle attack against his own enemies.

Specifically, Carla Rossi Bellotto identified Bronzino's Morgante with the Aramean Giambullari, basing her assertion on the interpretation of a passage in Grazzini's *Guerra de'*

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<sup>63</sup> Kaborycha, L., *Among Rare Men: Bronzino and Homoerotic Culture at the Medici Court*, March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010, lecture given at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, as part of the exhibition *The Drawings of Bronzino*, January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010 - April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The video of the talk is available on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJdaupuUzUw>.

<sup>64</sup> See p. 210.

*mostri* (1998: 36). The scholar suggested that the leader of the monsters army Finimondo identified as Giambullari was described in this poem as the double-side painting representing Morgante: he has “due visi come Giano / può innanzi e ‘ndietro a sua posta vedere, / senza voltarsi” (*Guerra de’ mostri*, VIII, 5-6). Although this description can be linked to *Morgante nano*, Rossi Bellotto however mistakes the nature of Finimondo, as he is not a dwarf as she claims, but rather a hybrid creature half man and half lynx: “questo dal mezzo in suso è corpo umano, da indi in giuso poi è lupo cerviere” (*Guerra de’ mostri*, VIII, 3-4). The reference to the dwarf Morgante is therefore inconsistent; but it helps to support the thesis that the dwarf might be interpreted as an Aramean. More likely, Morgante could be identified as the Aramean Giovan Battista Gelli. In a short poem by Grazzini included in the *Rime burlesche* (1799, VIII: 277), the poet recognised Gelli in a tapestry made by Bronzino:

Cosi lo Ignogni, il Gallo, e il re Piccino,  
 Qualche guagnele sciatto, e trafurello  
 Si tratta sempre, come il mio Bronzino  
 Trattato ha quel buffon magro del Gello,  
 Acciò che, per vendetta del divino  
 Monsignor Bembo, ognun possa vedello  
 Filosofo in vulgar, poeta pazzo,  
 Dipinto vivo in un panno d’arazzo.

Rossi Bellotto (1998: 35-36) suggested that the poem could have referred to the tapestry *Giuseppe trattiene prigioniero Simeone* in the Joseph the Hebrew series by Bronzino and Nicolas Karcher (circa 1545-1548), where Gelli might be identified as Simeon, Joseph’s treacherous brother.<sup>65</sup> However, the scholar arrives at this conclusion without taking into consideration the pygmies quoted in the poem: Ignogni, Gallo and re Piccino (re Pimmeo) are

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<sup>65</sup> The tapestry, designed by Bronzino and made by Karcher, is now preserved in the Quirinal Palace, Rome.

the names of three pygmies in the *Nanea*. As Bronzino's *Morgante* was considered to be similar to a tapestry for its ability to show both sides of the dwarf, it is possible that the work Grazzini is referring to in his poem is exactly the canvas representing Morgante. In this way Gelli is linked to the pygmies/Arameans in the *Nanea* through the depiction of Morgante, interpreted as a pygmy/Aramean himself. The key to understanding this strong bond between poetry and painting, and the necessity to use poetry to appreciate the hidden meanings of painting and vice versa, is provided by Bronzino himself in his capitolo *In lode delle cipolle*: “[Poesia e pittura] son due sorelle e ciascuna si parte / da un ceppo medesimo, e un fine / conseguono imitando, o in tutto o in parte...” (193-195). The accusation of sodomy represented in the panel with the owls and the moths shall be, therefore, addressed to Gelli, that Bronzino often puns with this accusation in his poetic production.

In the *Morgante nano* Bronzino possibly communicated the depravity of Gelli and company, linking them to the sinful behaviour of Native Americans. However, *Morgante* can also be considered a useful tool to clarify the position of Cosimo in the Accademia Fiorentina and to investigate the relationship between Bronzino and his Medicean patrons. We know that the painting was commissioned to Bronzino by the duke himself, who found a valuable companion in the dwarf. Their unique relationship is not only attested by the numerous portraits of *Morgante* that we have already listed, but also by the constant presence of the dwarf in diplomatic missions and courtly matters.<sup>66</sup> The relevant role played by the dwarf at

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<sup>66</sup> In a letter to Agnolo Niccolini, Lorenzo Pagni described how Cosimo's guard captain Pirro Colonna accused *Morgante* of “malocchio” and stroke out at him. This injustice amply displeased the ducal couple, that “V. S. sa, quanto amano questo Nano”. ASF, 4, f. 297, 13th June 1541. Detlef Heikamp (2006: 292-293) reports the document signed by the duke to grant *Morgante* with a small farm in Arezzo. The document attests all the sympathy and affection that Cosimo had for the dwarf: “Braccio nuncupato *Morgante Bartholi de Podio Fornionis* [...], nano ducalis palatii nostri ac servitor nostro nobis dilectissimo [...]. Grata tue servitutis obsequie que diu et absidue circa personam tam nostram quam illustrissime coniugis nostre ac etiam filiorum nostrorum, et tam intus quam foris ac per diversa loca, prestitisti plurimave oblectamenta per te nobis exhibita, que cum non parum procedere quasi ex fatuitate anime tui et multum ex tue mentis defectu facile cognoverimus, iocunda ob id admodum

the Medici court made Bronzino's painting a symbol of Cosimo's identity and ideology. The panel was intended to be placed in the duke's *guardaroba*, where "the works placed in this room were meant to speak to and about Cosimo" (Ghadessi, 2011: 273). The décor of the *guardaroba* was organised to display the political and cultural power of the Medici household and, as we have already seen, it included the New World artefacts of Cosimo's collection (Gáldy, 2009: 219-221). As such, the painting could be considered a visual pun of Cosimo for Cosimo, representing at the same time the Arameans that were part of his political agenda, his favourite dwarf and the collectible items from the New World that he greatly appreciated. *Morgante nano* is a *mirabilia* in all ways, a joke of art and nature that eventually represents the entire collection of the duke and his political microcosm in one single item.

The political meaning of the painting, as well as the political readings of the *Nanea*, the *Piato*, and of the burlesque production of the time would have remained unknown to the ruling class. Otherwise, these works would have been censored, and the authors banished. This was clearly not the case as Serafini continued to be a member of the Accademia Fiorentina, and Bronzino, although expelled from the academy, was the official portraitist of the Medici family until the 1560s. The references to the Medici in these works are so subtle that the authors could easily defend their production, saying that the *Nanea* is simply the story of the classical war between giants and pygmies, the 'medici' unfavourably compared to mosquitoes were just doctors ('medici' in Italian), and the *Morgante nano* just a painting of the dwarf Morgante. However, considering the anti-Medicean climate created by the Arameans rising to power in the Accademia Fiorentina, it is likely that these works silently

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fuere et solatium non mediocre tribuerunt" ("To Braccio di Bartolo called Morgante from Poggio Fornione [...], dwarf of our ducal palace and our beloved servant [...]. We are grateful for the service that you provided to me, to my illustrious wife and to our children, both in town and abroad in different places, and for the numerous pastimes that you offered us, that having been recognised as created, to say, by the foolishness of your soul and by the weakness of your brain, have been extremely enjoyable and gave us great solace"). Translation is mine.



contain all the frustrations of the academicians against the Medici who not only allowed, but even encouraged, the reformation. These political readings can only be highlighted by considering the role of the New World mythology in these works, allowing us to completely reinterpret them in a new light.

## CONCLUSIONS

Crossing the Atlantic like Ariosto's hippogriff, the myths developed by the Europeans in the Americas are an index of the colonisation of the New World during the Age of Discovery. Hybrids like the hippogriff, these 'New World myths', as I have referred to them in this thesis, represent the imposition of Old World traditions and world views on the newly discovered lands. As the explorers relocated the Greek and Roman pantheon in Brazil, the Caribbean and Canada, they transformed the indigenous myths, cultures and ways of life that they encountered forever. Back in Europe, these myths were further domesticated and put to various purposes by those who adopted them. As we have seen in this thesis, the Italian epic poets used them to communicate wonder, curiosity, anxiety and aspiration. Very rarely were they used to express genuine interest in the New World inhabitants and traditions or horror at the consequences of the ruthless colonisation of their lands. The New World myths, therefore, are an emblem of the ignorance and mysticism felt by the Europeans when confronted with the many marvels of the Americas.

Italian epic poets re-imagined, shaped, created and invented their own New World by incorporating these myths into their poems. Like Atlante with his hippogriff, they attempted to raise "alta meraviglia" (*Of.*, IV, 17, 4) in their readers as they contemplated the beauty and danger of the New World, and used it to offer new perspectives and viewpoints not so much on the newly discovered lands, but on their native realities. The poets discussed in this thesis used the New World myths to communicate old agendas in new ways and to express their own intentions, be they nationalistic, propagandistic, satirical or political.

This study set out to explore the development of New World myths in modern Italian epic poetry. Its first task was to assess how widespread the use of New World myths actually was in Italian epic poems, and to explore what poets did with them. The first thing to say in this regard is that the Italians were rather slow on the uptake, and poems dealing explicitly with America did not begin to emerge until almost a hundred years after Columbus crossed the Atlantic. The late development of an American-inspired poetry is partly due, of course, to the lack of direct participation in the conquest of the New World by Italian leaders and naval fleets. Though individual princes collected maps, stories and objects from the New World, their inability to contribute directly to the discoveries must have been enough of a sore point to discourage poets to embrace them fully. Poetic creativity during the period was inextricably linked to the need to secure and maintain patronage, and there were certain subjects it was better not to address. It is highly likely that the New World and the European conquest of it was one. Poets were also inhibited by the quarrels around poetics that proliferated in the period and by the Aristotelian rules that began to emerge with increasing inflexibility during the period. Since fantastical material was discouraged and strict rules about verisimilitude began to emerge, it may be that poets felt more comfortable sticking to the classical myths and legends that had served their predecessors so well. A further hypothesis of this thesis is that certain poets simply did not know what to do with the New World materials, nor how to integrate them into their poems. For this, I suggest, they were criticised by those who did feel ready and able to exploit the Americas into their poems, and this criticism was part and parcel of the Baroque desire to break with the past and to move on from the Sixteenth-Century nostalgia for Greece and Rome.

Furthermore, my thesis argues that New World myths were more present in *Cinquecento* poetry than is commonly thought, and that they featured – albeit in ‘watermark’

– in poems that were not explicitly about America. There are clear signs of New World influence as early as Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, for example, and – in particular – in the hippogriff's route across the Atlantic to Alcina's island which followed Columbus's voyage. Despite these traces of New World influence, Ariosto is not commonly thought of as a New World poet. Nor are Serafini and Bronzino, whose poems studied in this thesis show clear signs of American influence. Their dwarves, inspired as much by the Canadian pygmies as by court dwarves, bear witness to the slow but steady (and hardly surprising) integration of New World materials into the Italian imaginary.

The so-called Columbian poems, which were the first to deal explicitly with the New World, therefore, had precedents to draw on. Their wholesale adoption of the New World materials, though, were more a sign of rupture than of continuity, of their desire to embrace a new Baroque aesthetic with its celebration of violence and virility (so perfectly encapsulated in the colonial exercise) and to move forward from the restrained effeminacy of *Cinquecento* tastes and manners. What did these poets do with the New World materials? As well as use them to glorify conquest and the superiority of European civilisation, they used them to praise and criticise the courts they lived and worked in. With their ability to amaze and dazzle, the New World marvels were the perfect vehicles for scarcely concealed satire. Behind the fantastical stories in foreign lands, in other words, poets hid indirect commentaries on the felicities and discontents of life at home. The American Amazons were, for example, enabled to claim a role for Italy in the process of 'inventing' the Americas. Others employed the Patagonian giants to comment on the brutality of the American conquest, and the Canadian pygmies to criticise the European inability to engage fully with the marvels of that New World. The Canadian pygmies also enabled others still to celebrate marvels of the New World, while poking fun at their European patrons.

A second aim of this thesis was to examine the means by which Italian epic poets received the news from the Americas and how different media might have influenced their representation of the New World myths. In most cases, written accounts by the New World explorers were the primary sources, as can be seen by the repetition in some of the epic poems studied of the actual words used therein. The American Amazons, for example, are imported into epic poems from explorers' chronicles almost word for word. Why was it so difficult for poets to make these texts their own and to translate them into their own words? One explanation for the undigested regurgitation of New World myths might be that the poets were so dazzled by what they read that they failed or feared altering it in case of losing its effects. Modern readers can only imagine the impact on the European imaginary the discovery of the Americas must have had and the inability of individual poets to take the New World myths on board. The pressures of verisimilitude, too, may have compelled them to stick to the 'historical' records. If their representations of the New World were believable, then the persuasive power of their poems would be all the stronger and the ends for which they were written (to please, to flatter and, in many cases, to criticise their patrons and peers) were more likely to be achieved.

The New World myths did not just come from written sources though. Maps, images, and material objects gathered by European collectors had an impact on Italian epic poetry that should not be – but is – underestimated. One of the most original contributions of this thesis is its demonstration that in some cases, the visual and material testimonies of the New World actually trumped the literary accounts. Italian poets were often more influenced, whether consciously or not, by the visual and material testaments to the Americas that they were able to see in the courts they lived and worked in. The Amazons who were imported verbatim from the literature, were also influenced by engravings and cartouches. It was the iconography of

the Amazons, rather than the explorers' chronicles, that influenced their deployment by certain poets who wished to argue that the presence in the Americas of Italian explorers like Columbus and chroniclers like Ramusio made up for the absence of Italian fleets. Using the Amazons as symbols of the Americas that these Italians had conquered, they were able to celebrate their own nationalist agendas and assert that Italy had, after all, made a major contribution to the New World conquest. The Patagonian giants, too, were similarly influenced by visual images which, in direct contrast with the chronicles, depicted them as fierce and threatening. The negative portrayal of the giants on maps and in other visual materials, therefore, allowed poets to promulgate an image of the Americas as a land of corruption and savagery. By contrast, it was items collected in the Florentine *Wunderkammer* that enabled other poets to portray the Americas positively, as lands of wonder and marvels. Much like the court dwarves, Canadian pygmies were both a talking point and a curiosity, but above all, a source of wonder to include in the poems for political and social purposes.

The final concern of this thesis was to determine what, precisely, the New World mythology enabled epic poets to say about their own political, social and cultural contexts. The New World myths offered poets a new screen on to which they could project their own fears, worries, hopes and aspirations about the world. While *Cinquecento* poets may have feared embracing the New World for fear of displeasing their patrons and reading public, later poets saw in the New World materials a unique opportunity to comment on their own world without fear of causing offence. The myth of the American Amazons, for example, gave poets the chance to celebrate Italian participation in the New World, but also to express their fears about powerful women and perceived changes in the balance of power between men and women in their environments. The Patagonian giants permitted them to satirise powerful people and entities, such as individual patrons and the ecclesiastical system (especially in

Stigliani's poem). In the *Nanea* and the *Piato*, the Canadian pygmies represented the group of Arameans close to Cosimo I de' Medici's ideology, and allowed their poets to mock the politics of the duke himself without fear of being detected.

There is a clear pattern emerging as a result of the domestication of the New World myths; this is well exemplified in the transformation of America from a savage naked Amazon, to a religious civilised woman. Such metamorphosis is evident in the frontispiece of Bartolomei's *America* drawn by the German engraver Johann Friedrich Greuter (fig. 107). Here Vespucci is welcomed by a personification of America dressed in full regalia, with the garments resembling that of Europe in the numerous representations of the four continents series. The Florentine fleur-de-lis appearing on America's dress indicates the Italianisation, or in this case Florentinisation, of the New World, domesticated in order to create a counterpart of the world at home.

One of the principal merits of this thesis has been its original approach to the New World myths that have never before been explored in relation to Italian epic poetry and in terms of the Italian literary invention of the Americas. Whilst New World myths have been amply considered in scholarship, as have Columbian poems, my work presents a novel combination of these two fields. It suggests that the way in which the New World mythology is presented in Italian epic poetry can help us understand what the discovery of the Americas meant for the Italians. It also suggests that reading the poems from the perspective of the New World myths offers new and innovative insights into what the poets thought about Italy.

A further merit of my thesis is its adoption of a method that combines literary study with the study of images, maps and material objects. This has enabled me to show how the presence of the New World in Italian epic poetry can only be fully appreciated when the different sources used by the poets are taken into account. Without a combined approach it

would have been impossible to show how the Patagonian giants present in epic poems demonstrate features derived from visual sources, or to demonstrate that the location and description of Armida's island in the *Gerusalemme liberata* is directly inspired by Gutiérrez-Cock's 1562 map of the Americas. The figure of Arcigrandone is better understood when viewed alongside the figure of Syphilis in Bronzino's *Venus, Cupid and Time (Allegory of Lust)*, whilst the New World as it appears in the *Nanea* and *Piato* makes more sense when compared to Bronzino's double painting of the dwarf Morgante. Combining art history with philology and cultural studies, in other words, has yielded original insights and suggested a need within literary studies for more interdisciplinary perspectives.

A final strength of this thesis has been its collection of a wide range of primary sources, though this constitutes a weakness as well. In keeping with the philological principles on which the thesis has been built, I have dedicated time not just to textual criticism, but to the sourcing, dating, transcribing and translating of manuscripts, incunabula, images and maps relating to the New World. The long appendix to the thesis will attest to the sheer volume of materials collected at libraries and in archives all over the world, the most exciting of which must be the Huntington Library Rare Book 109496 and the Caspar Vopel's 1558 world map. The research has been formative – teaching me paleographical, archival, philological and interpretative skills I did not have before – and the findings have been exciting. However, I am aware that I have not been able to do justice to the richness and range of these materials in this thesis. A weakness of this thesis, therefore, lies behind one of its strengths and it is my hope that future projects will include the preparation of critical editions as well as a more detailed study of the abundance of sources relating to my topic.

Clearly, the study of New World myths could be extended to other European literatures as well. Although focused on the Italian context, this study offered a glimpse of works such as



Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo's *Las sergas de Esplandián*, William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and François Rabelais's *Pantagruel*, showing how all European poets took part in the literary and mythological construction of the New World. A comparison with Spanish and Portuguese epic poetry would put some of the hypotheses of this thesis to the test because of the prominent roles of Spain and Portugal in the American colonies but this, unfortunately, falls beyond the scope of my thesis. French and English poems dealing with the discovery of the Americas, too (such as Pierre de Ronsard's *Les Isles fortunes*, 1553, William Warner's *Albion's England*, 1586, and Michael Drayton's *Ode to the Virginian Voyage*, 1606) also fall outside my remit but promise further perspectives on the Italian case. According to Israel Villalba de la Güida (2014: 50), between 1581 and 1892 twenty-eight epic poems about the New World in English, Spanish, French, Italian and Latin were published in Europe, showing that poetical interest in the Americas extended all over Europe. It would be interesting to see how these European poets treated the myths of the American Amazons, Patagonian giants and Canadian pygmies, and to compare them with the Italian poems – but this will be for a thesis other than mine.

Italy constructed an image of the New World while the New World reshaped the Italy imagination. The way in which the Italians imposed their Old World traditions and world views on the newly discovered lands is encapsulated in the image of the Caribbean nightingales. Columbus reports having listened to these 'birds of paradise' singing in the forests of Haiti, as he wrote in the letter to Santángel (Columbus, 2011). In the same way, Ariosto's Ruggiero heard their call when he arrived in the American island of Alcina: "tra quei rami con sicuri voli / cantanto se ne giano i rosignuoli" (*Of.*, VI, 21, 7-8). In reality, these birds never lived in the Caribbean, but Columbus imaginatively imported them to America in order to fulfil his idea of the New World as a paradise (Olschki, 1937: 11-21; Gerbi, 1973:

161). Ariosto did the same, using the nightingales to combine the traditional image of the *locus amoenus* with the new unknown reality overseas. Like Columbus, epic poets listened but heard what they wanted to hear. As far as the New World mythology in Italian epic poetry is concerned, Goethe's well known aphorism, "we see only what we know", appears once again to hold true.

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**THE NEW WORLD MYTHOLOGY IN ITALIAN EPIC**

**POETRY: 1492-1650**

by

**CARLA ALOÈ**

**Volume II**

**A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree  
of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**Department of Italian Studies  
School of Languages, Cultures, Art History and Music  
College of Arts and Law  
University of Birmingham  
September 2015**

## **APPENDIX: ILLUSTRATIONS**

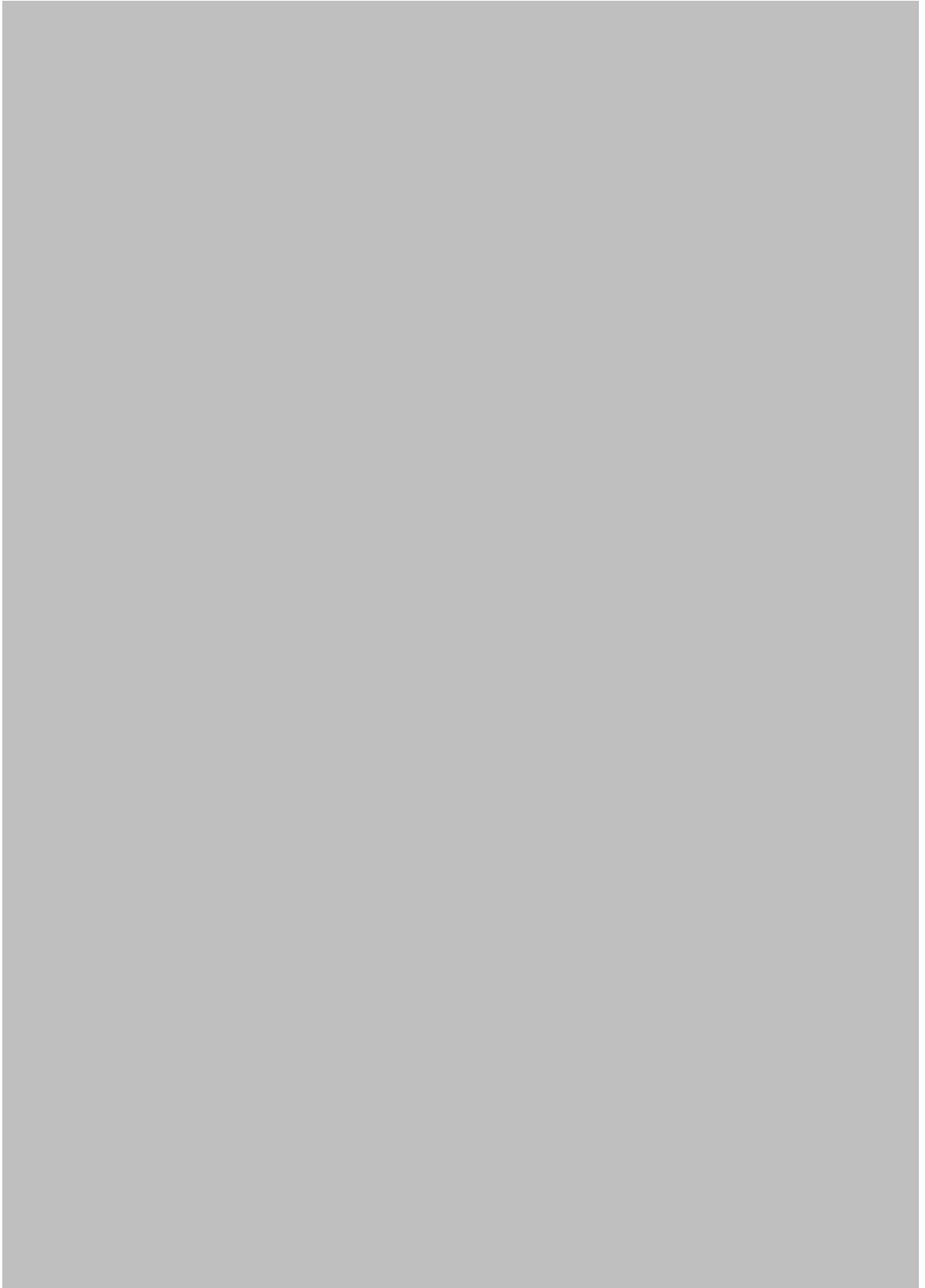


Fig. 1. Bernardo Castelli, Frontispiece of Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, Genoa, 1590.



Fig. 2. Jacopo Zucchi, *Allegory of the Discovery of America*, 1585, Rome, Galleria Borghese.



Fig. 3. Juan de la Cosa, *Carta universal*, 1500, Puerto de Santa María (Cadiz). Preserved in the Naval Museum in Madrid, MNM CE257



Fig. 4. Piri Reis, *World Map*, 1513. Now preserved in the Topkapı Palace library, Istanbul, Turkey, H 1824.



Fig. 5. *Atlas Vallard*, 1547. Preserved in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, HM 29 (10). Portolan chart of West Indies, Mexico, Central America, northern South America.



Fig. 6. Pierre Desceliers, *Mappemonde*, 1550. The map is preserved in the British Library, London, Add. MS 24065.



Fig. 7 Caspar Vopel, *Nova et integra universalisque orbis totius description*, 1558. Detail of Amazon and cannibal in Brazil. The map is preserved in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, 51\*2577P



Fig. 8. Lodovico Buti, Mexican Warrior, 1588, Uffizi Gallery, Florence  
© De Agostini Editore.





Fig. 9. *Genoese Planisphere*, 1457. Now preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence, Italy, Port. 1.



Fig. 10. *Genoese Planisphere*, 1457. Detail of the hippogriff.



Fig. 11. Pierre Desceliers, *Mappemonde*, 1546. The map is preserved in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, UK, French MS 1\*. Detail of South America. © Austin Whittall



Fig. 12. Sebastian Cabot, *World Map*, 1544. Image from the Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library.



Fig. 13. Sebastian Cabot, *World Map*, 1544. Detail of the Brazilian Amazons.



Fig. 14. Watercolour of South America in *Composite Atlas of Early Printed and Manuscript Maps of the Americas*, RB 109496, pp. 221. Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.



Fig. 15. Abraham Ortelius, Title page, *Theatrum orbis terrarum*, Antwerp, 1570. © Barry Lawrence Rudeman



Fig. 16. Jan Sadeler after Dirck Barandsz, *America*, 1581. © Leen Helmink



Fig. 17. Crispijn van Passe, *America*, 1596. © Biblioteca Casanatense.



Fig. 18. Marteen de Vos & Adriaen Collaert, *America*, 1600.



Fig. 19. Matthias Quad, Title page, *Fasciculus geographicus*, Cologne: Johan Buzemacher, 1608. © Tooley Adams & Co.





Fig 20. Cesare Ripa, *America*, in *Iconologia*, Rome: Lepico Facii, 1603.



Fig. 21 Cesare Ripa, *America*, in *Iconologia*, Siena: Heredi di Matteo Florimi, 1613.



Fig. 22. Theodor de Bry, *Americae tertia pars*, Frankfurt, 1592. © Encyclopædia Britannica

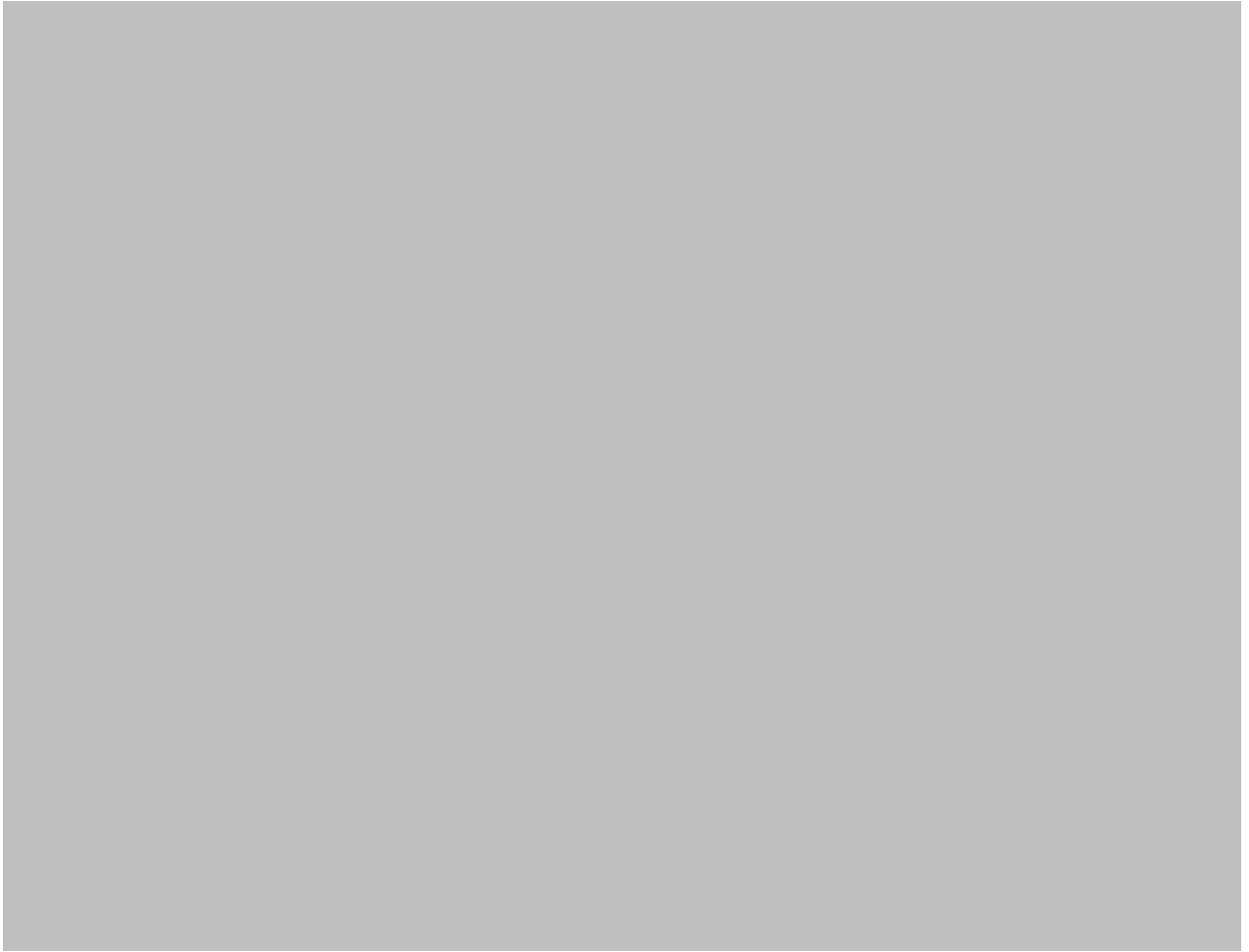


Fig. 23. Levinus Hulsius, Amazon Battle, in *Kurtze wunderbare Beschreibung: dess Goldreichen Königreichs Guianae in America*, 1599, p. 14, RB 3861. Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.



Fig. 24. Philips Galle, *America*, in *Prosopographia*, Antwerp, 1590.

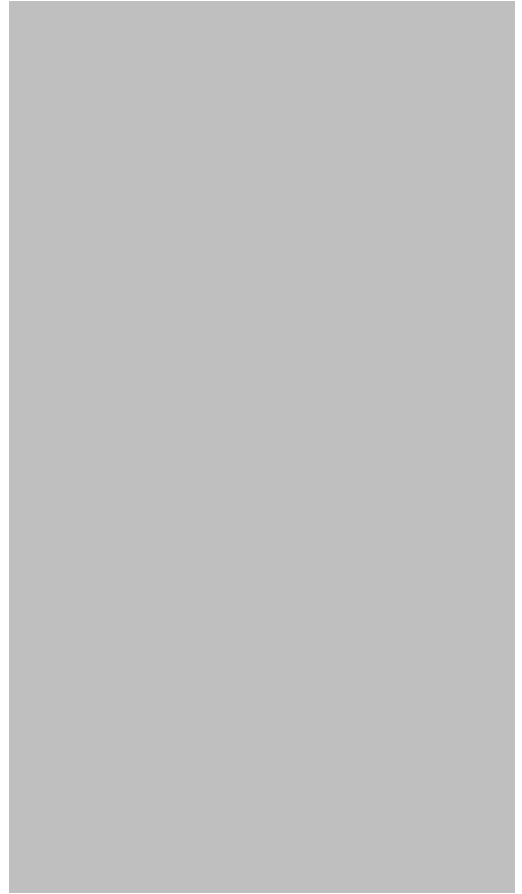


Fig. 25. Benvenuto Cellini, *Perseus with the Head of Medusa*, Florence, Piazza della Signoria, Loggia dei Lanzi, 1545 © BY-SA 3.0



Fig. 26. Stradanus, *Vespucci Landing in America* (1587-89). © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Fig. 27. *America*, Sala Maggiore, Palazzo Lodron, Trento, 1577.



Fig. 28. John Hamilton Mortimer, *Caliban*, 1775. © Art Institute of Chicago



Fig. 29. Giulio Romano, *Chamber of the Giants*, Palazzo Te, Mantua, Italy, 1532-1535. North wall.



Fig. 30. Giulio Romano, *Chamber of the Giants*, Palazzo Te, Mantua, Italy, 1532-1535, detail of the East wall fresco.





Fig. 31. Andreas Walsperger, *Mappa mundi*, Konstanz, 1448. Now preserved in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City, Pal. lat. 1362 B.



Fig. 32. Piri Reis, *World Map*, 1513. Detail of the cynocephalus dancing with the monkey in South America.

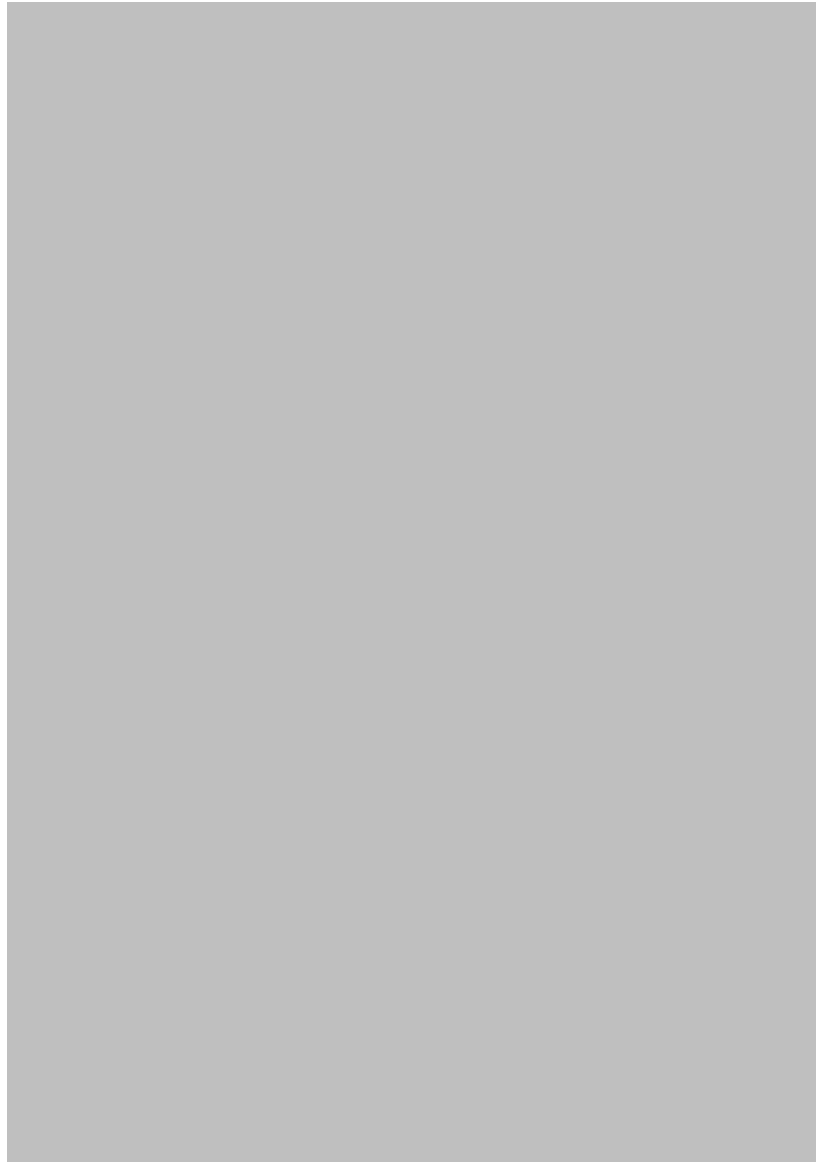


Fig. 33. *Genoese Planisphere*, 1457. Detail of king Senap.

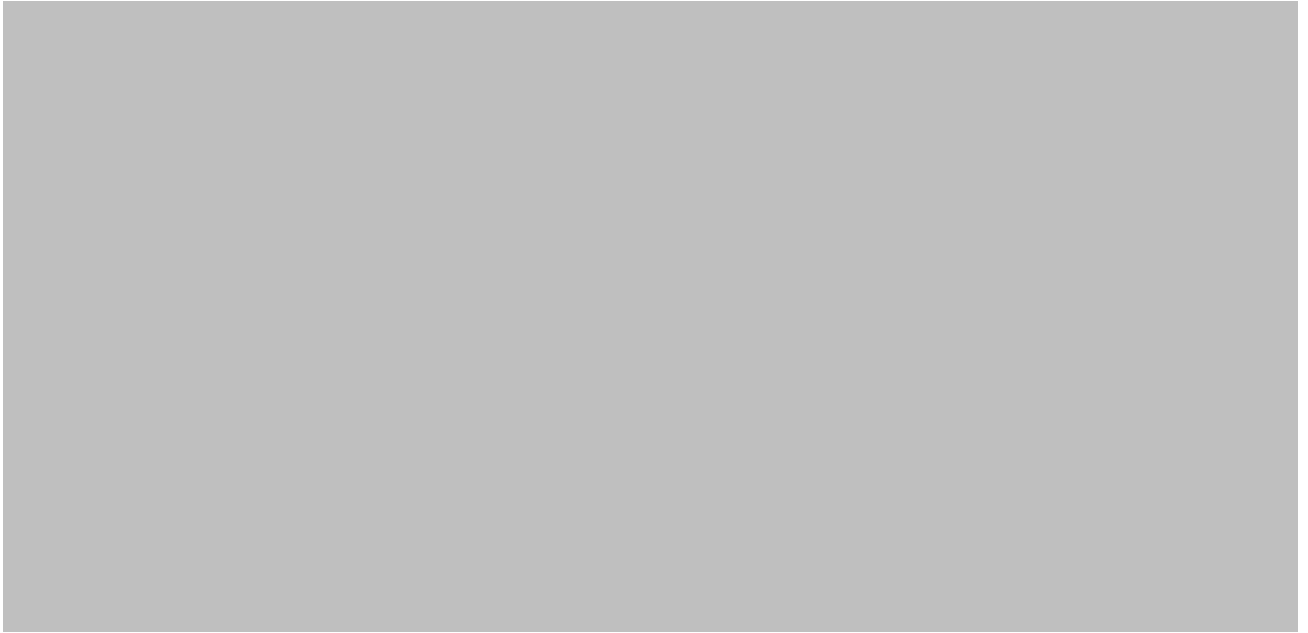


Fig. 34. *Cantino Planisphere*, c. 1502. Now preserved in the Biblioteca Universitaria Estense, Modena, Italy, c.g.a.2.



Fig. 35. *Cantino Planisphere*, c. 1502. Detail of the Caribbean region and South America.



Fig. 36. Francesco Rosselli, *Planisphere*, c. 1508. Here reproduced is the exemplar in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, G. 201: 1/5 A. Other exemplars are in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence, Landau Finaly, Carte Rosselli, leaf 1; in the Arthur Holzheimer collection, Chicago, and in the Ratsschulbibliothek, Zwickau, Germany.



Fig. 37. Arnoldus Florentinus van Langren, *Delineatio omnium orarum totius australis partis Americae*, in [*Composite Atlas of Early Printed and Manuscript Maps of the Americas, Probably Compiled in France*] 1616-1720s, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA, USA, RB 109496, p. 164.



Fig. 38. Walter Bigges, *Relation Oder Beschreibvg Der Rheisz Vnd Schiffahrt Ausz Engellandt*, 1589, inside map, detail of Patagonia, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA, USA, RB 108550.

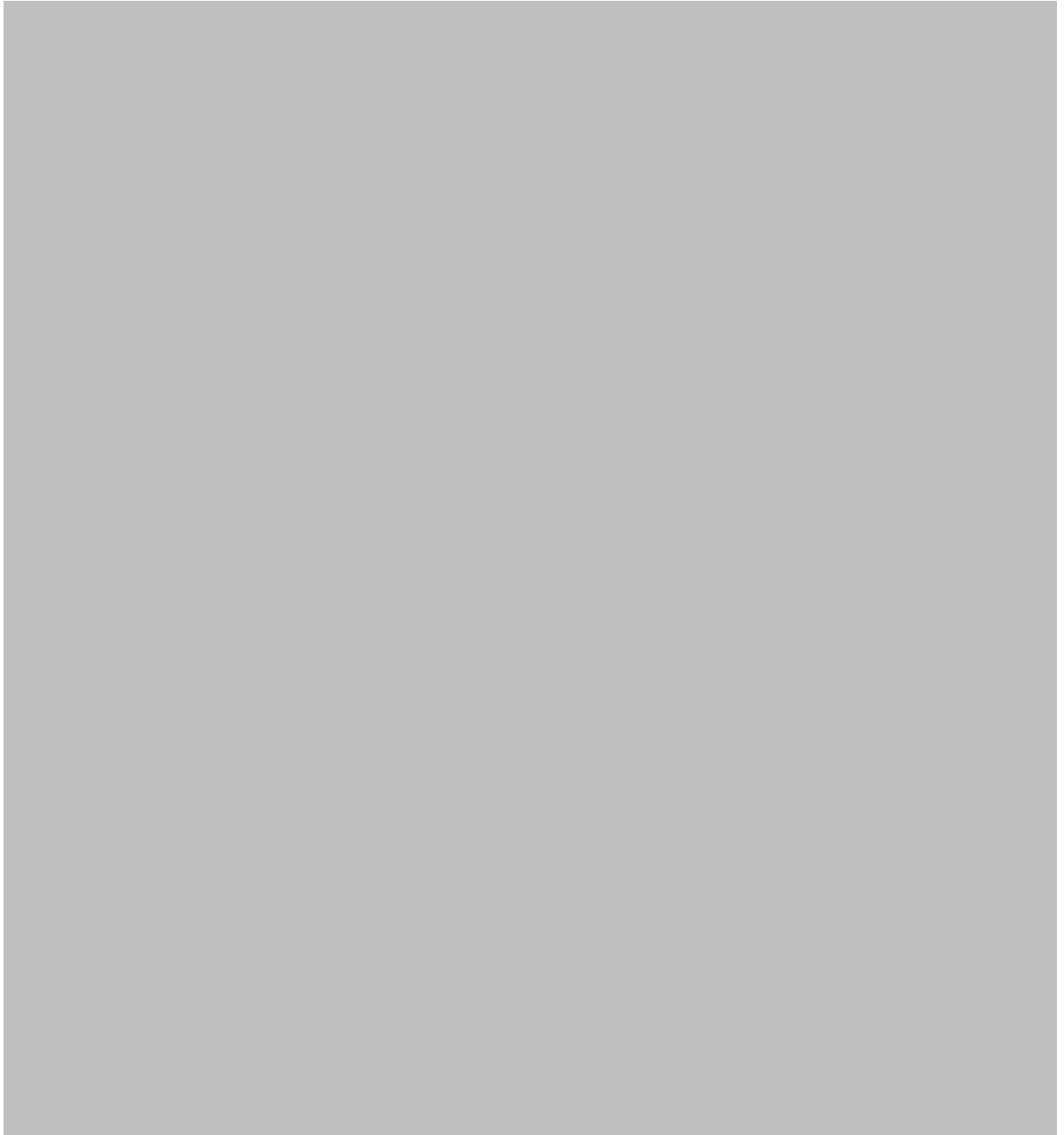


Fig. 39. Diego Gutiérrez and Hieronymus Cock, *Americae sive quartae orbis partis nova et exactissima description*, Antwerp, Belgium, 1562. The only two copies survived are preserved in the British Library, London, UK, Maps \*69810.(18); and in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., USA, G3290 1562.G7. © Library of Congress.



Fig. 40. Diego Gutiérrez and Hieronymus Cock, *Americae sive quartae orbis partis nova et exactissima description*, detail of Patagonian giants. © Library of Congress





Fig. 41. Petrus Plancius, *Haec pars Peruviana, regiones Chicam & Chile[nsem] complectitur, & regionem Patagonum*, Amsterdam, 1592. Archive of Early American Images, The John Carter Brown Library, Providence, Rhode Island.



Fig. 42. Willem Jansz Blaeu, *Nova et acurata totius Americae tabula*, Amsterdam, 1608.



Fig. 43. Willem Jansz Blaeu, *Nova et acurata totius Americae tabula*, detail of Patagonian giants.



Fig. 44. Johannes Stradanus, *Ferdinandus Magalanes Lusitanus*, in the *Americae relectio series*, Antwerp, Belgium, c. 1580s.

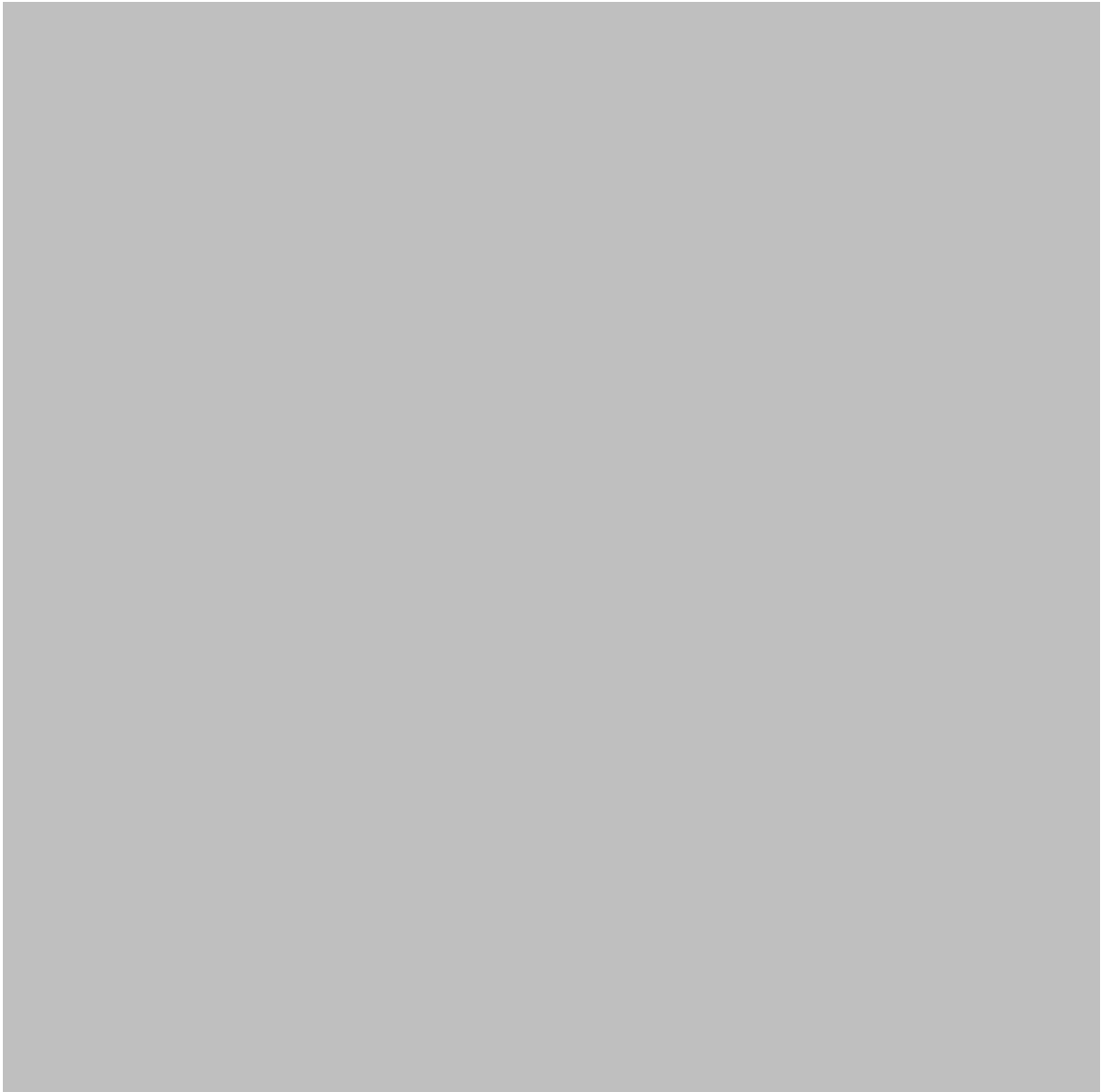


Fig. 45. Hondius the Elder, *World Map*, Amsterdam, 1595/6, detail of Patagonian giants.



Fig. 46. Levinus Hulsius, *Nova et exacta delineatio Americae partis australis que est: Brasilia, Caribana, Guiana regnum novum ...*, Nuremberg, 1602.



Fig. 47. Cornelius Claesz, *Map of America*, Amsterdam, 1602, detail of the Patagonian giant.



Fig. 48. Theodor de Bry, *Tijpus freti Magellanici, quod Georgius Spilbergius cum classe lustravit* in [*Composite Atlas of Early Printed and Manuscript Maps of the Americas, Probably Compiled in France*] 1616-1720s. Huntington Library, San Marino, CA, USA, RB 109496, p. 305. In the map the South is at the top.



Fig. 49. Levinus Hulsius, *Deliniatio freti Magellanici*, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 1626, detail of the Patagonian giant.





Fig. 50. Annibale Carracci, *A Man as Bacchus Drinking Wine, with Two Youths, a Magpie, and an Ape*, Sixteenth Century.

Private collection, Spain.

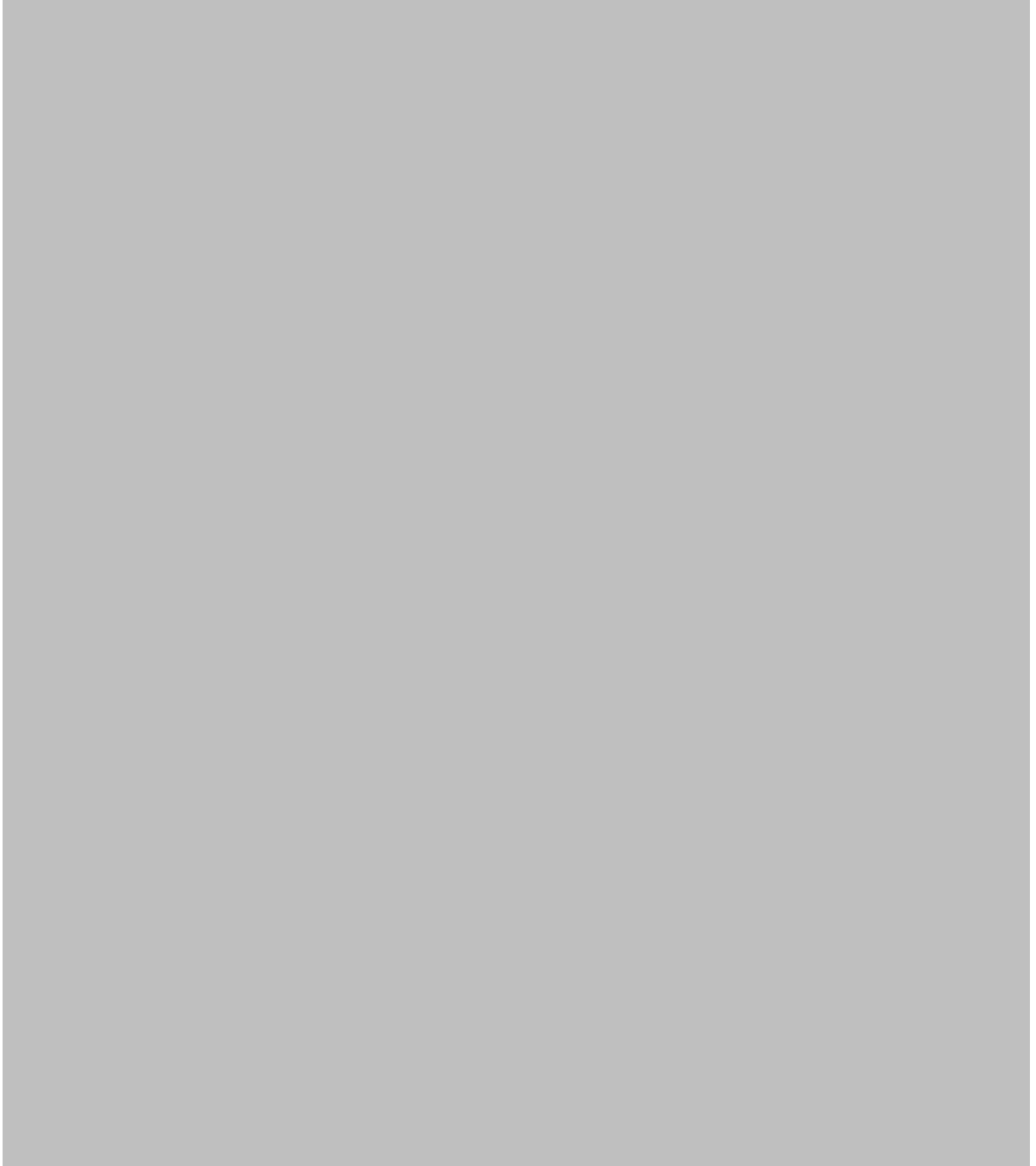


Fig. 51. Hendrick Ter Brugghen, *Bacchante with an Ape*, 1627, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA, 84.PA.5.



Fig. 52. Maarten de Vos, *Gustus*, late Sixteenth Century, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland, New Zealand, Peter Tomory Collection, No: 2004/30/122.



Fig. 53. Diego Gutiérrez and Hieronymus Cock, *Americae sive quartae orbis partis nova et exactissima description*, detail of the cannibals.



Fig. 54. Diego Gutiérrez and Hieronymus Cock, *Americae sive quartae orbis partis nova et exactissima description*, detail of the flying fish.



Fig. 55. Diego Gutiérrez and Hieronymus Cock, *Americae sive quartae orbis partis nova et exactissima description*, detail of the two mermaids in the South Pacific Ocean.



Fig. 56. Cesare Ripa, *Falsità di amore, ovvero inganno*, 1618.



Fig. 57. Example of buckler.



Fig. 58. Achille Marozzo, *Opera nova de l'arte de l'armi*, Modena: Antonio Bergola, 1536, book I, cap. 10, "Del primo assalto de gioco largo de spada e brochiere".

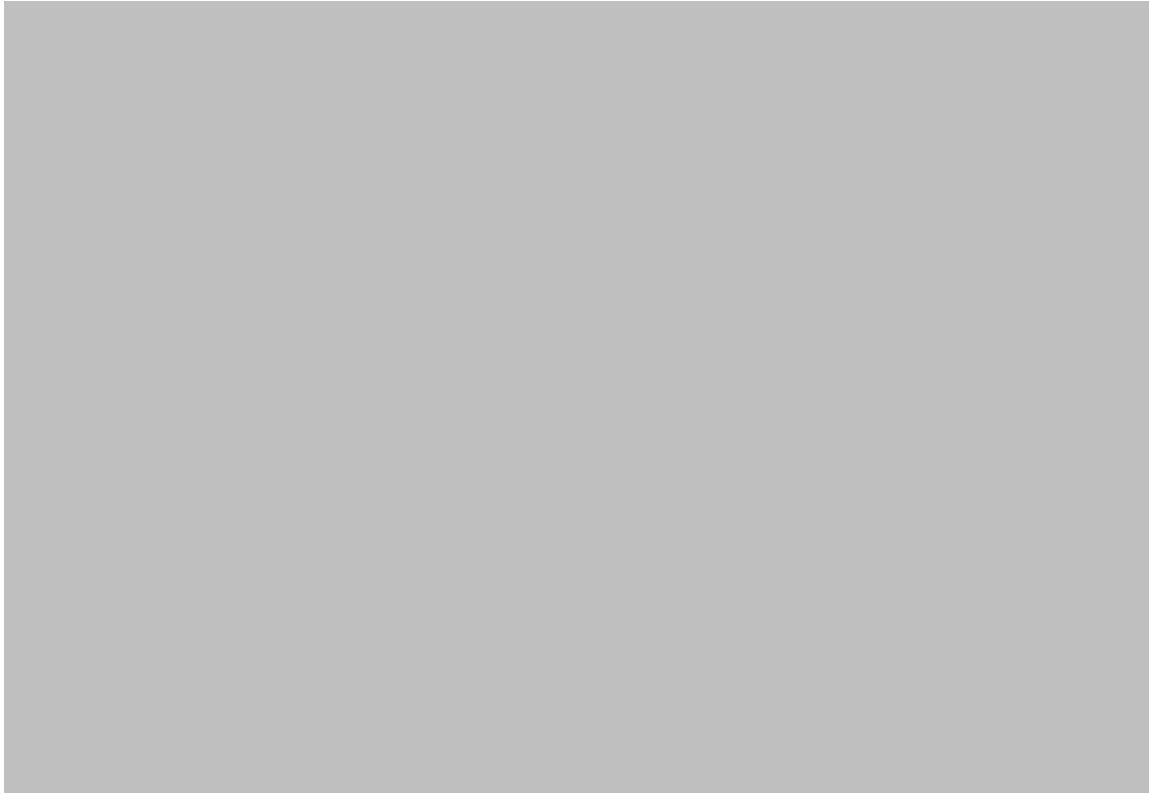


Fig. 59. Perino del Vega, *The Hall of the Giants*, 1530-1532, Palace of Andrea Doria in Fassolo, Genoa. West wall.





Fig. 60. Diego Gutiérrez and Hieronymus Cock, *Americae sive quartae orbis partis nova et exactissima description*, detail of Neptune taking King Philip II to the New World on his chariot.

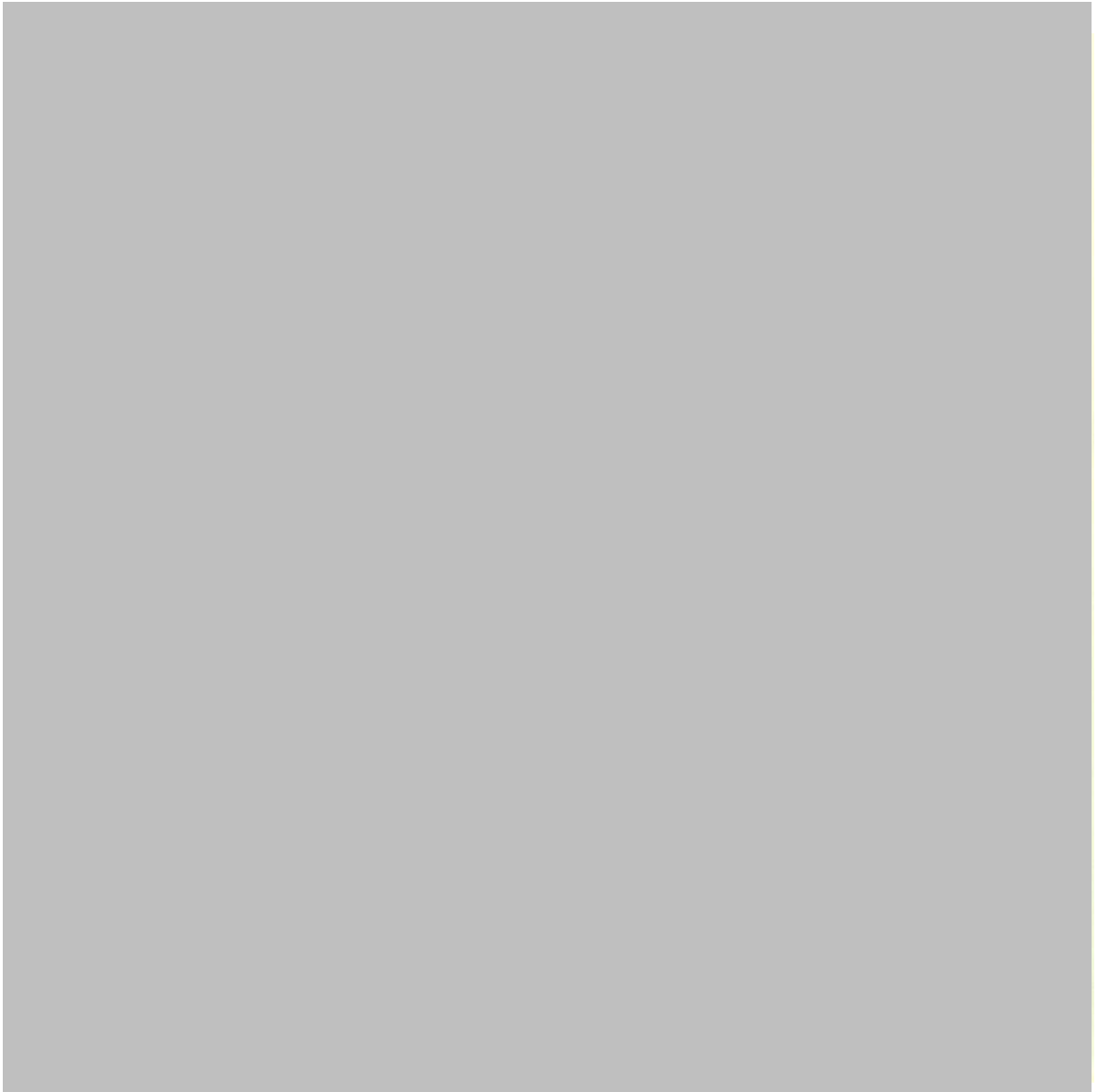


Fig. 61. Balthasar van den Bos, *The Giants restoring Olympus*, 1558.



Fig. 62. Girolamo Ruscelli, *Tierra nueva*, Venice, 1561.



Fig. 63. Tommaso Stigliani, *Mondo nuovo*, Piacenza: Alessandro Bazacchi, 1617, frontispiece.



Fig. 64. Levinus Hulsius, *Map of Southern South America and Tierra del Fuego*. Here the copy published in 1602 in Frankfurt am Main. Detail of the Patagonian giant.



Fig. 65. *Monstre marin, ayant la teste d'un Moyne*, in Ambroise Paré, *Les Oeuvres*, Paris: G. Buon, 1585.



Fig. 66. *Figure d'un monstre marin, ressemblant à un evesque, vestu de ses habits pontificaux*, in Ambroise Paré, *Les Oeuvres*, Paris: G. Buon, 1585.



Fig. 67. *Das sind die new gefunden Menschen, 1505.*



Fig. 68. Johannes Stradanus, *Americus Vesputius Florentinus*, in the *Americae relectio series*, Antwerp, Belgium, c. 1580s.





Fig. 69. Andrea Alciati, *Book of Emblems*, emblem 132, mid-Sixteenth Century.



Fig. 70. Johannes Stradanus, *Christophorus Columbus Ligur*, in the *Americae relectio series*, Antwerp, Belgium, c. 1580s.



Fig. 71. Abraham Ortelius, *Theatrum orbis terrarium*, 1573, detail of an ichthyocentaur.



Fig. 72. Willem Janszoon Blaeu, *Africae nova descriptio*, in *Theatrum orbis terrarum, sive atlas novus*, 1635.



Fig. 73. Willem Janszoon Blaeu, *Africae nova descriptio*, in *Theatrum orbis terrarum, sive atlas novus*, 1635, detail of western North Africa.



Fig. 74. Willem Janszoon Blaeu, *Europa recens descripta*, in *Theatrum orbis terrarum, sive atlas novus*, 1635.



Fig. 75. Willem Janszoon Blaeu, *Andaluzia continens Sevillam et Cordubam*, in *Theatrum orbis terrarum, sive atlas novus*, 1635.



Fig. 76. Willem Janszoon Blaeu, *America noviter delineate*, in *Theatrum orbis terrarum, sive atlas novus*, 1635. Detail of Patagonia.



Fig. 77. André Thevet, *Les Singularitez de la France antarctique*, Antwerp: Christophe Plantin, 1558, 108.



Fig. 78. *Cannibals on a Caribbean Island*, in Lorenz Fries, *Uselegung der Mercarthen oder Carta Marina*, Strasbourg: Johannes Grüninger, 1525, leaf XVI.



Fig. 79. Giovanni Botero, *Aggiunta alla quarta parte delle Indie*, Venice: Alessandro Vecchi, 1623, A3r.





Fig. 80. Pierre Desceliers, *Mappemonde*, 1546. The map is preserved in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, UK, French MS 1\*.



Fig. 81. Pierre Desceliers, *Mappemonde*, 1546. Detail of the St Lawrence River.



Fig. 82. Pierre Desceliers, *Mappemonde*, 1550. The map is preserved in the British Library, London, Add. MS 24065. Detail of pygmies fighting with cranes.



Fig. 83. Olaus Magnus, *Carta Marina*, 1539. Detail of Iceland and Greenland.



Fig. 84. Caspar Vopel, *Nova et integra universalisque orbis totius description*, 1558. Detail of a pygmy fighting a crane in Canada. The map is preserved in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, 51\*2577P.



Fig. 85. Valerio Cioli, *Pygmy on a Snail*, Villa Medici, Careggi, after 1599.

Fig. 86. Valerio Cioli, *Pygmy on a Owl*, Villa Medici, Careggi, after 1599.

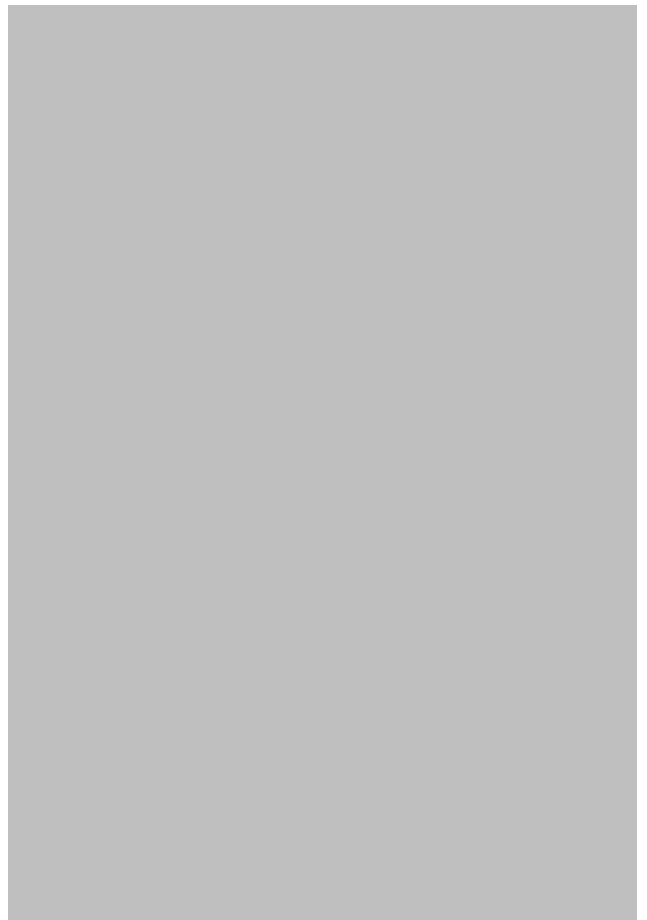




Fig. 87. Girolamo Benivieni, *Dialogo di Antonio Manetti circa al sito, forma et misure dello Inferno di Dante Alighieri*, 1506.



Fig. 88. Stradanus, *The Return of Cosimo I after His Coronation*, engraved by Philips Galle, after 1575.



Fig. 89. Agnolo Bronzino, *Nano Morgante*, Florence, c. 1550, now preserved in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence.



Fig. 90. Giorgio Vasari, *Cosimo I de' Medici as a Superintendent in Elba*, Florence: Palazzo Vecchio, 1555-1565.



Fig. 91. Valerio Cioli, *Nano Morgante su una tartaruga*, Florence: Boboli Gardens, c. 1560.





Fig. 92. Giambologna, *The Dwarf Morgante on Sea Monster*, Florence, 1582, now preserved in the Bargello Museum, Florence.

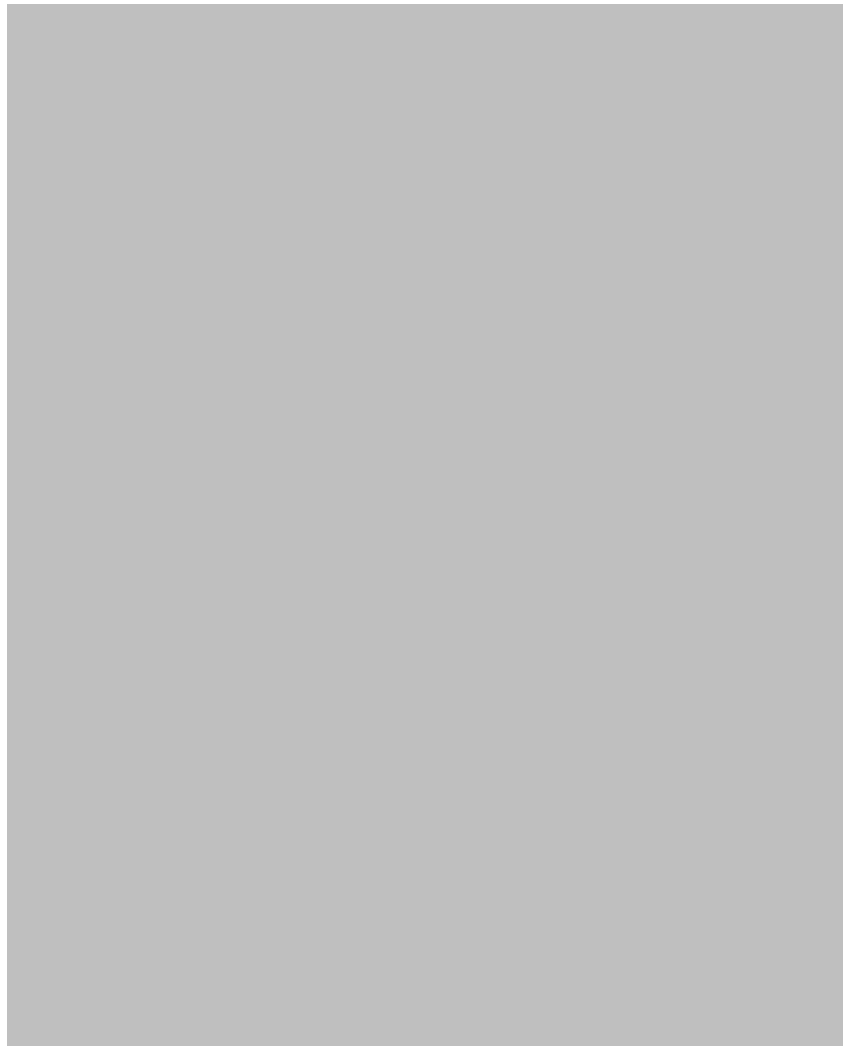


Fig. 93. Agnolo Bronzino, *Saint Bartholomew*, fragment of the pala for the Altar of the Graces, Pisa Cathedral, 1555. Now preserved in the Accademia nazionale di San Luca, Rome.



Fig. 94. Agnolo Bronzino, *Venus, Cupid and Time (Allegory of Lust)*, Florence, c. 1545. Now preserved in the National Gallery, London, level 2, room 8.

Fig. 95. Agnolo Bronzino, *Venus, Cupid and Time (Allegory of Lust)*, detail of Jealousy/Syphilis.



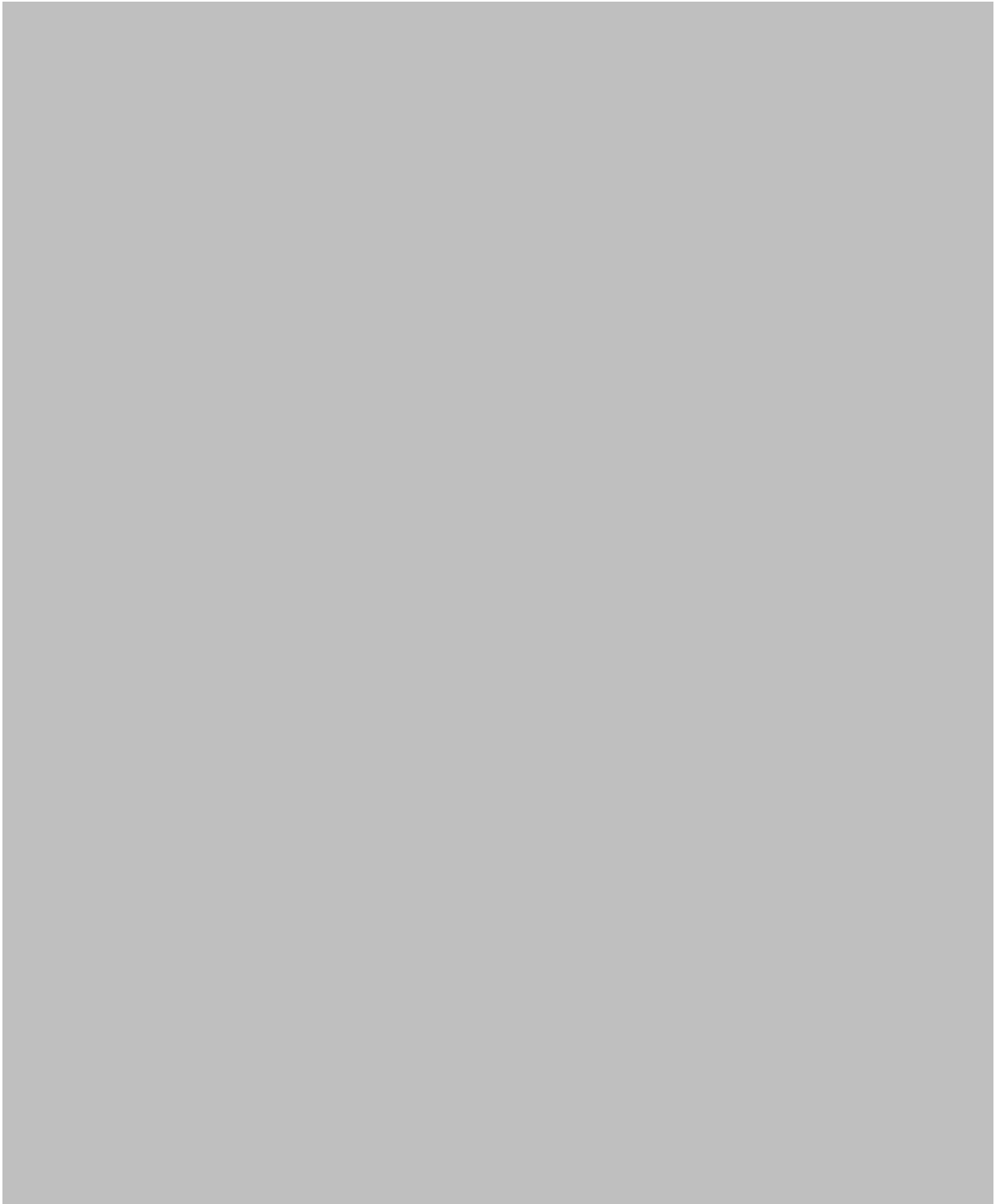


Fig. 96. Agnolo Bronzino, *Portrait of Eleonora of Toledo with Her Son Giovanni*, Florence, c. 1545. Now preserved in the Uffizi Gallery, the Tribune, room 18.



Fig. 97. Agnolo Bronzino, *Portrait of Leonor Álvarez de Toledo*, Florence, 1543. Now preserved in the Sternberg Palace, Prague.



Fig. 98. Francesco Salviati, *Triumph of Camillus*, Florence, Sala delle Udienze of the Palazzo Vecchio, 1545.



Fig. 99. Bartolomeo Ammannati, *Fountain of Juno*, Florence, originally designed for the Sala Grande in the Palazzo Vecchio, 1555. Now in the Bargello Museum, Florence.

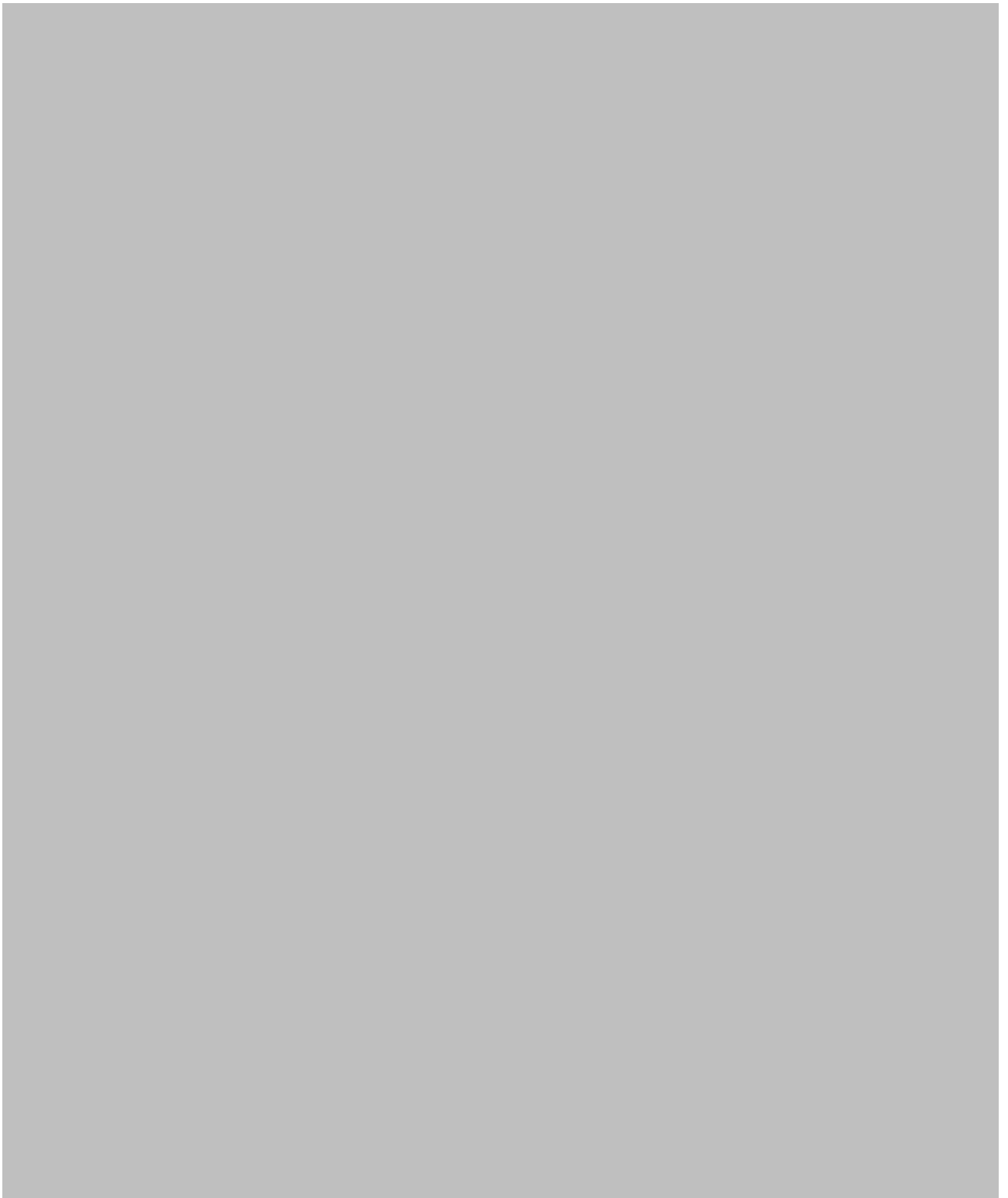


Fig. 100. Agnolo Bronzino & Jan Rost, *Joseph in Prison and Pharaoh's Banquet*, Florence, originally designed for the Sala dei Duecento in the Palazzo Vecchio, 1546. Now in the Quirinal Palace, Sala del Bronzino, Rome.



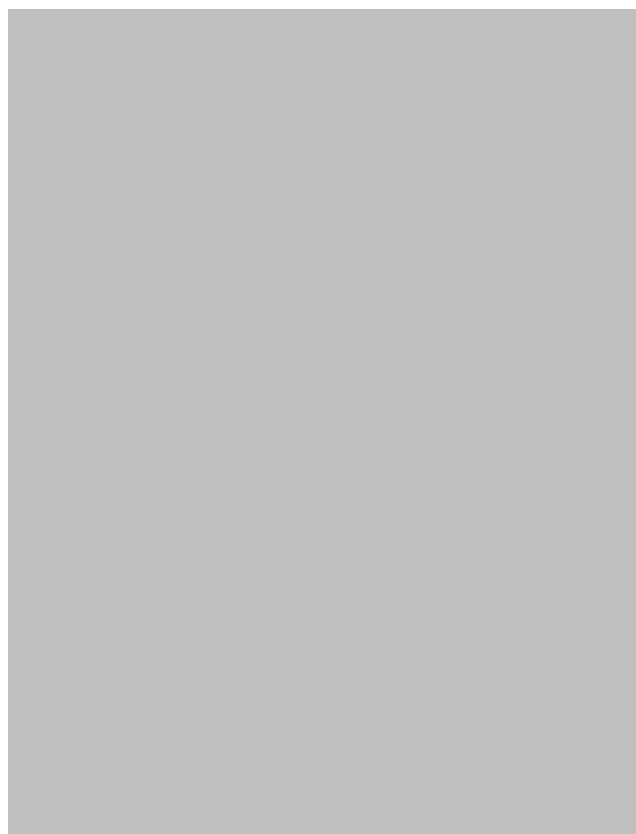
Fig. 101. Andrea Alciati, *Book of Emblems*, 1531.





Fig. 102. Agnolo Bronzino & Jan Rost, *Great Abundance*, Florence, 1545. Now in the Museo degli Argenti, Florence. © Dea/G. Nimatallah

Fig. 103. Agnolo Bronzino & Jan Rost, *Great Abundance*, 1545. Detail of turkey. © Dea/G. Nimatallah



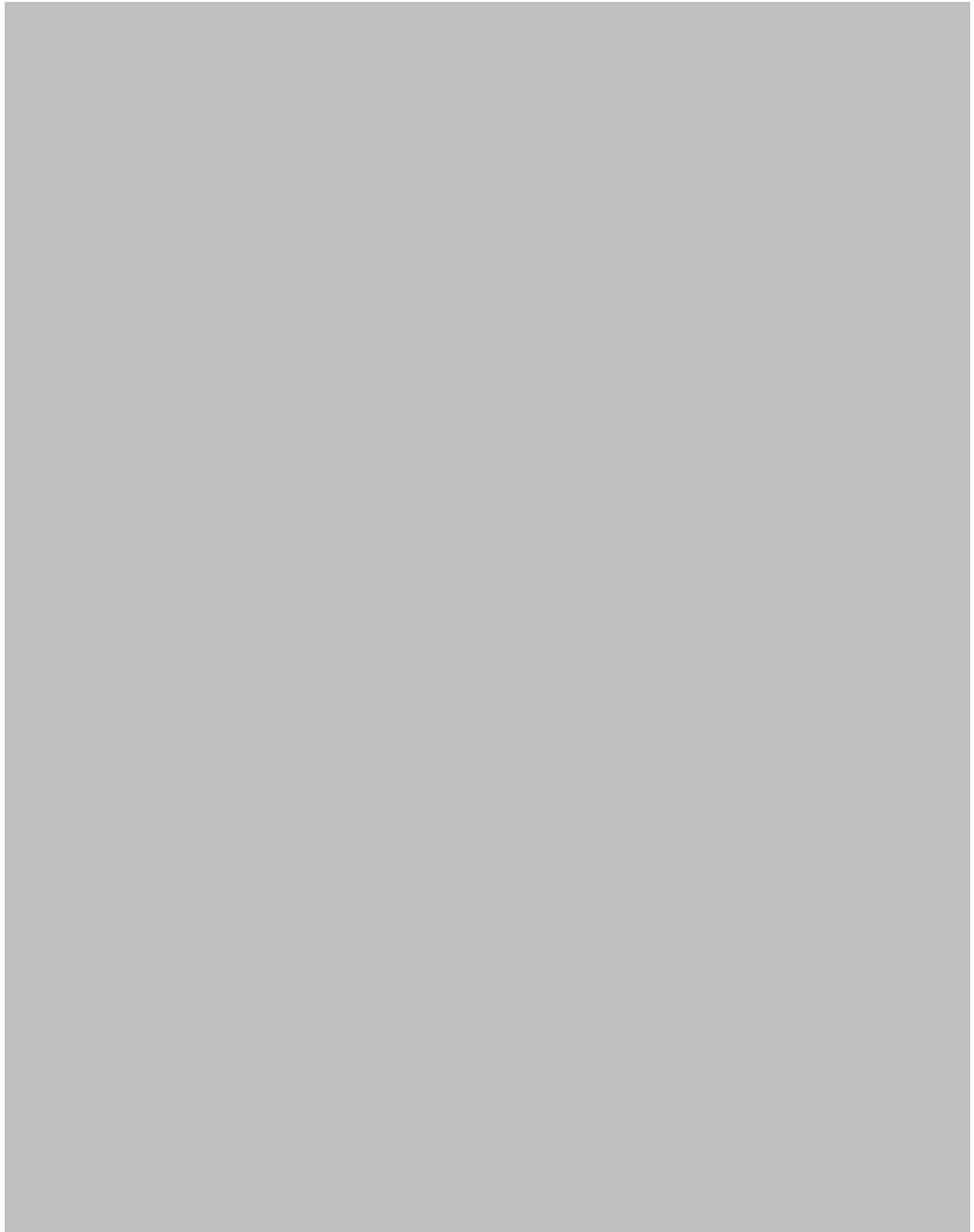


Fig. 104. Agnolo Bronzino, *Portrait of Giovanni de' Medici as a Child*, Florence, c. 1545. Now in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence, the Tribune, room 18.

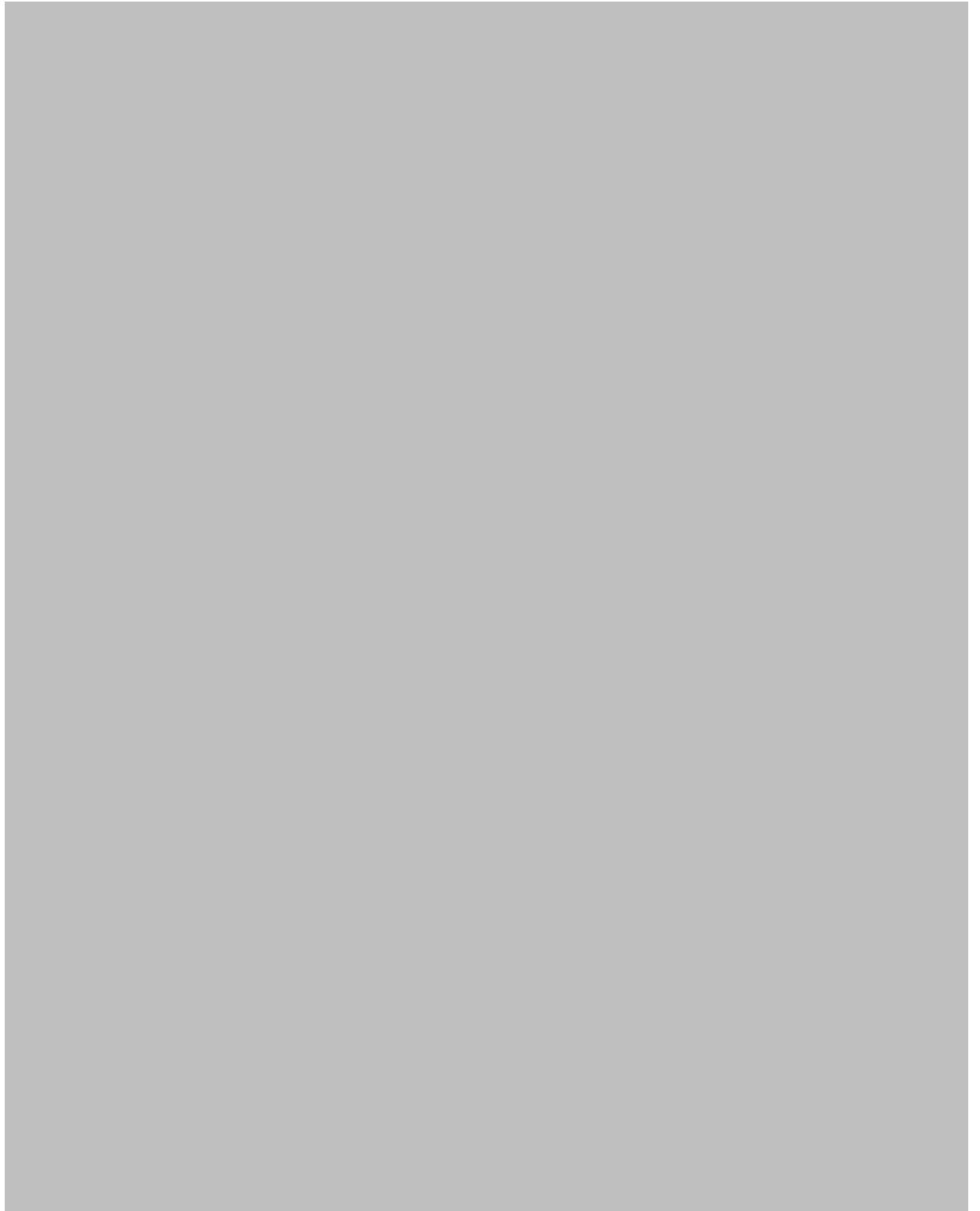
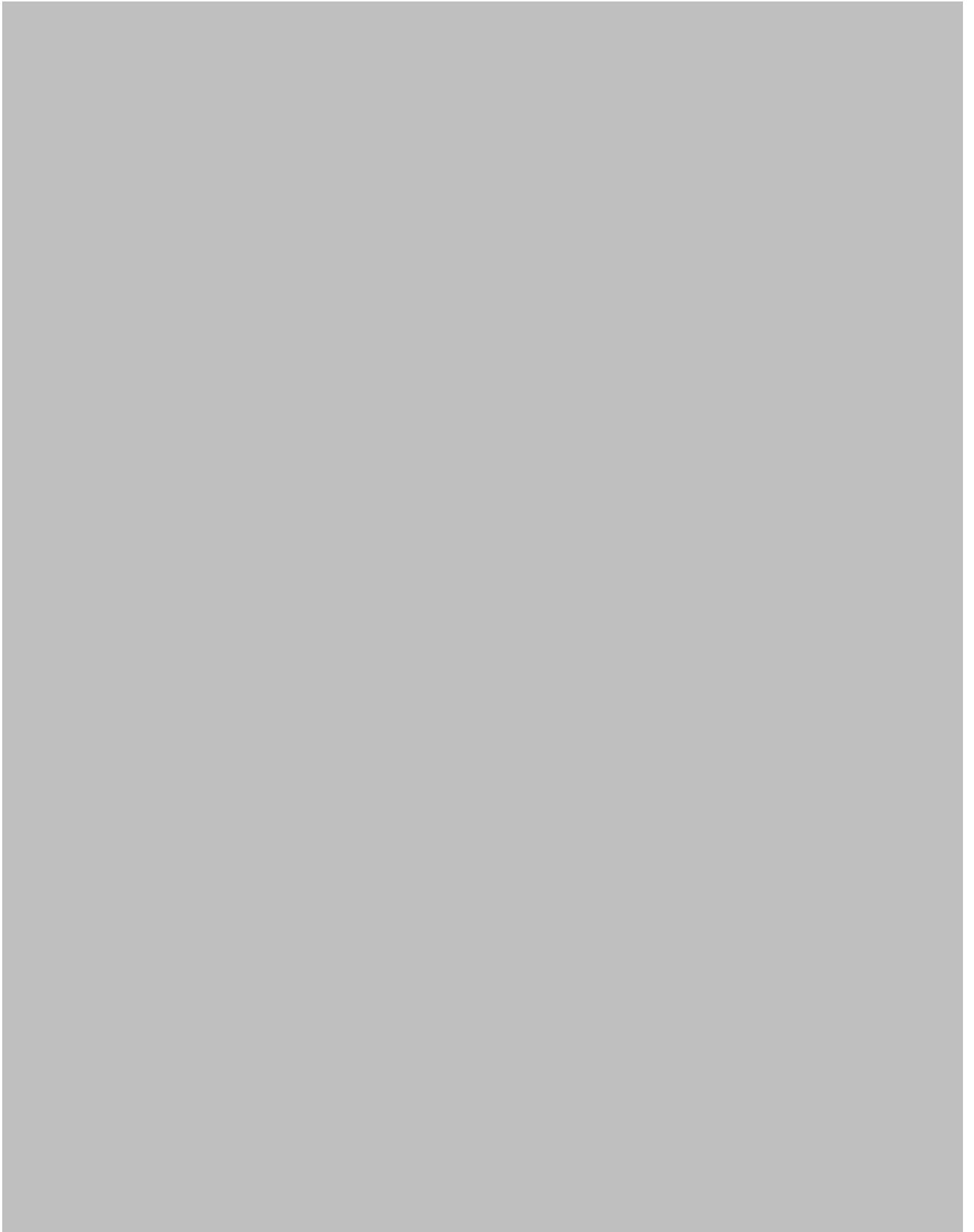


Fig. 105. Agnolo Bronzino, *Allegory of Happiness*, Florence, 1564. Now in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence, the Tribune, room 18.



Fig. 106. Pinturicchio, *Resurrection of Christ*, Apostolic Palace, Borgia apartments, Vatican City, ca. 1494.



107. Johann Friedrich Greuter, Frontispiece of Girolamo Bartolomei's *America*, Rome, Ludovico Grignani, 1650.