Jerusalem Delivered Study Guide

Jerusalem Delivered by Torquato Tasso

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

When Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* first appeared in a pirated edition in 1579, it was hailed as a great, albeit slightly flawed, art epic in the tradition of Dante and Virgil. Tasso, himself, was angry that the poem had appeared in print without his permission, especially since the manuscript had received some harsh criticism from its first readers. By the time the poem was printed in an authorized version, in 1581, its reputation as an uplifting, patriotic, influential, and brilliant examination of Christian Europe's heroic past was already established. Fellow Italians and other Europeans celebrated the poem's meaning and message. The English poets, especially those writing in the 1650s- 1680s, were heavily influenced by Tasso's skill as a poet and word-crafter. Edmund Spencer and John Milton both credited Tasso's poem as an inspiration to their own epic poems, while literary critics such as John Dryden, Anne Dancier, and William Hayley all praised the work as the best modern epic poem before *Paradise Lost*. Although his poem achieved great success, Tasso either did not believe the praise or did not like the moral looseness of his characters. By 1591, he had drastically re-written the poem, eliminated all of the romance, magical, and adventure elements leaving only a moralistic and religious core. Tasso liked the finished product, but no one else did. Although few people read epic/heroic poetry for pleasure anymore, *Gerusalemme Liberata* continues to be one of the most important and influential works from the late Italian Renaissance.

Author Biography

Torquato Tasso, long regarded as the last great poet of the Italian Renaissance, was born in Sorrento, Italy on March 11, 1544. His father, also an epic poet, had political problems and was forced to move frequently; Tasso's mother died mysteriously when he was just twelve years old. Tasso, like most other poets of his time, sought patrons from among the wealthy aristocrats and churchmen that littered the Italian landscape. Tasso started the poem that would become *Gerusalemme Liberata* when he was sixteen and continued working on the poem until 1593. Most critics agree that all three of his major poems, *Rinaldo* (1562), *Gerusalemme Liberata (Jerusalem Delivered)* (1581), and *Gerusalemme Conquistata*, are essentially the same poem with different foci that mirror Tasso's emotional state at the time of each publication.

Rinaldo is an epic romance dealing with a young man in the spring of life. At the time, Tasso was enjoying some poetic success and working for Luigi, the Cardinal d'Este. His courtly love poetry addressed to the Cardinal's sisters, Lucrezia and Leonora d'Este, won him considerable praise. According to his letters, this was the happiest time of his life.

Heavily influenced by Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and Matteomaria Bioardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, Tasso set out to write an epic poem that joined the adventure, magic, and intrigue of those works with the heroic, moral, and religious ideals of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. Between 1562 and 1575, Tasso worked on *Gerusalemme Liberata* while living with Duke Alfonso II. This period of his life was a painful one. Tasso began displaying a mental disorder that drove him to paranoid delusions and to see conspiracies all around him. He had given his poem to several friends for comment and constructive criticism, but was stung by their harsh treatment of his masterpiece, and his grip on reality spun out of control. His behavior became so erratic that the duke was forced to imprison Tasso in a mental institution for seven years. While he kept in contact with the outside world, and even published his prose treaties on epic and heroic poetry, Tasso never really regained his sanity. Duke Alfonso did release Tasso in 1586, but he did not recover.

Tasso roamed Italy for the next nine years, never securing a stable patron or quieting the demons inside his mind. He rewrote *Gerusalemme Liberata*, removing all of the romance, intrigue, and chivalric elements, in order to reinforce the moral duty of Christians in an unchristian world. *Gerusalemme Conquistata* was published in 1593 much to Tasso's delight, but to his supporters' disappointment. His earlier works, especially *Gerusalemme Liberata* won him many admirers, but he no longer trusted anyone. In fact, Tasso's reputation was so respected and well-known that the pope named him the Poet Laureate for the Papal States in 1594. However, Tasso no longer cared for fame. On April 25, 1595, after a serious illness, Torquato Tasso died in the convent of Saint Onofrio in Rome. His work would go on to influence generations of poets, especially English poets like Edmund Spencer, John Milton, and Thomas Gray.

Plot Summary

Overview

Gerusalemme Liberata is, nominally, a poem about the First Crusade in the eleventh century CE. The First Crusade was ordered by Pope Urban II in 1094 as a way for European Christians to "liberate" Jerusalem from the Muslim Turks who had conquered the city several years earlier. The leader of the First Crusade was Godfrey of Bouillon (in modern-day Belgium) and he marched his multinational army across Europe, Asia Minor, and finally into the Middle East. He surrounded Jerusalem and eventually defeated the Turkish armies stationed there. He then set up the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem so Christians could travel to the Holy Land without having to pay taxes. To the historical record, Tasso adds several knights, an enchantress, some Amazons, and a good deal of magic. The plot of the poem evolves around not only Godfrey's desire to capture the city, but also the love affairs of Clorinda, Tancred, and Erminia, and that of Armida and Rinaldo. The poem is divided into twenty cantos of varying lengths. Tasso suggests a four part structure in terms of the storyline.

Part I

The first section of *Gerusalemme Liberata* includes Cantos I, II, and III. Here, the groundwork for the developing plot surrounding the adventures of Godfrey and the various lovers is laid. Godfrey's campaign against the Turks is divinely inspired. God, much like the Greek and Roman gods in earlier epics did, selected Godfrey and told him to gather all the bravest Christian men together and to pick a leader. Godfrey's companions elect him leader and they all swear loyalty to him. Tasso uses this opportunity to introduce the major Christian characters, both historical and imagined. The army then sets out for the Holy Land. Their fame quickly precedes them and Aladine, the Turkish king, prepares for war. Tasso does mention the real reason for the Crusade in Stanza 84 when he suggests that Aladine eliminated the taxes on the Muslim population but kept them on the Christians. Aladine, already described as a cruel king, decides to execute a couple of Christians, Sophronia and Olindo, because they have been accused by Ismen, a magician, of hiding the location of an idol that could destroy Godfrey's approaching army. Of course, they deny this and Aladine is going to execute them. They are saved by the arrival of Clorinda, a Persian Amazon warrior, who offers to lead the Muslim troops on the condition that Aladine spare the two lovers. He agrees to this arrangement. Meanwhile, the Egyptian Muslims send ambassadors to Godfrey to find out what he wants. The Egyptians are bound by treaties to help Aladine and they want to avoid Godfrey's invasion altogether. However, Godfrey rejects their offer of peace and tells the ambassadors that as long as Jerusalem remains in the hands of "pagans," he will continue to fight. The ambassadors leave as Canto II closes. Canto III finds the Christians at the walls of Jerusalem. Aladine brings in a refugee to identify the Christian knights. Erminia, niece of the dead king of Antioch, knows all of these knights since they were the ones who killed her uncle and destroyed

her city. She points out each one, identifying the remaining characters. Clorinda proves her mettle as she leads the Muslims in the initial encounter. The Muslims win, a Christian knight named Dudon is killed, and the Christians lay siege. They set up their tents and start building the catapults, towers, battering rams, and other siege engines needed to destroy the city walls.

Part II

In the second group of cantos (IV-IX), the plot thickens, so to speak. Here, all kinds of problems get thrown in the Christians' way, most of them coming from Satan. Like most epics, the battles on earth are mirrored by battles on the cosmic scale. Here God is allowing Satan to torment and derail most of Godfrey's plans. In fact, Satan summons his fallen angels into a conference much like the one earlier in the poem. The result is an agreement to try to stop the Christians by any means necessary.

One of the most successful ways is through the use of sex. One of the devils devises a plan with Armida as the lynchpin. Armida is a beautiful enchantress who seeks out Godfrey's camp. She pretends to need his help, but in reality is trying to seduce as many of his men as possible. She is quite successful, especially after Godfrey refuses to help her.

Canto V muddies the waters even more. Rinaldo, one of Tasso's creations, is elected to replace the warrior killed earlier, but he is unpopular among some of the army. Rinaldo is the best fighter Godfrey has, yet Godfrey does not trust or believe him. The tension in the Christian camp is raised when Rinaldo kills Genrando for spreading lies about him. Rather than staying and explaining things to Godfrey, Rinaldo leaves. Meanwhile, Godfrey has allowed Armida to choose a few soldiers to help her get back home and they are chosen by lot. She departs taking her champions with her. Much to Godfrey's dismay, she has also "captured" a large number of other knights with her beauty and charm.

The problems in the Christian camp continue. Without Rinaldo, Godfrey cannot launch a full scale assault on the city and must settle for single combat. He does not have his greatest warrior, so he names Tancred as the Christian champion. Tancred is the second best warrior and he flights with the Muslim champion, Argantes. So well matched are they that their fight continues the entire day, ending only at night-fall. Both men are severely wounded and so the fight is a draw. However, the Muslim princess, Erminia, longs to nurse her beloved Tancred. She fell in love with him when he destroyed her city, Antioch. Unfortunately, she cannot go outside the city walls dressed as she is, so she borrows Clorinda's armor. Since no one would stop the leader of the Muslim army, Erminia is able to get outside the city walls. However, she is not a warrior and the guards recognize the armor and attack her, thinking she is Clorinda, who had killed one of the guards' fathers earlier. Erminia flees without ever seeing her beloved. Her appearance does help Tancred heal, though. He gets up from his sickbed because he thinks that the woman who came to him was his beloved, Clorinda. He had seen her in a dream much earlier in the poem and had fallen in love with her.

Canto VII, VIII, and IX follow several lines of the plot at once. Erminia gets away yet cannot get back to the city, and so ends up being taken in by some shepherds, while Tancred ends up being imprisoned in Armida's castle. Raymond then flights Argantes and almost wins. However, the demons fly in and disrupt the combat as a terrible storm drives the Christians back to their camp. Once they are back in their camp, they receive devastating news: their re-enforcements, Sven, Prince of Denmark, and his army, have been destroyed by Solyman. Solyman brutally murders Sven, who is a kinsman of Rinaldo and a survivor brings Sven's sword so that Rinaldo can take revenge. However, Rinaldo is no longer in the Christian camp. The news gets worse when news of Rinaldo's death reaches Godfrey's camp. Indeed, the entire Italian portion of the army threatens to pack up and go home. Godfrey is barely able to keep order. The only thing that prevents the entire disintegration of the Christian army is a nighttime raid by the Muslims. Solyman and Alecto attempt to destroy the Christians and they appear to be winning. However, God has had enough and forbids any further meddling by Satan and his demons. This breaks the spell Armida had put on the men who had followed her and they now return. Their return helps the Christians win the battle and Solyman flees back to the safety of Jerusalem.

Part III

The third part of *Gerusalemme Liberata* is the cantos that all the earlier action has been building up to. Here, Rinaldo and Godfrey are reconciled, the first assaults on the city are launched, the great battles are fought, and plans are laid.

Cantos X and XI deal with the plans for the first assault against Jerusalem. The Muslims plan their strategies inside, while the Crusaders celebrate mass and plan their attack. Godfrey is happy when he learns that Rinaldo is alive, and feels just a little justified when he finds out that Armida is an enchantress and not just some helpless maiden. The Crusaders attack Jerusalem at dawn and make a bloody day's work of it. Clorinda and Solyman lead the city's defenses and Tasso describes the fighting in heroic and chivalric terms. Godfrey is wounded and nightfall brings an end to the Christians' attack. The battle has proved to Clorinda that the siege machines that Godfrey built must be destroyed and, in Canto XII, she decides to burn them to the ground.

Before Clorinda can put her plan into action, she is told her earliest history. Instead of being born a Muslim, she was born a Christian and raised a Muslim. She finds this interesting, but it does not change her mind in anyway. She and a select few men steal out of the city and torch the wooden machines. On their way back to the city, Clorinda stops to kill a Christian soldier who has insulted her and so, gets locked out. She tries to blend in with the Christian troops, but she is recognized, not as herself, but as a Muslim. Tancred attacks her, not knowing who she is. He kills her and when he finds out who it is, he goes crazy with grief. Tancred does manage to baptize Clorinda before her death, but he is inconsolable. He even contemplates suicide, which was the only unforgivable sin for Renaissance Catholics, and is talked out of it by Peter the Hermit. The Muslims are now without a leader and Argantes swears revenge.

Cantos XIII and XIV deal with the reasons Godfrey reconciles with Rinaldo, while Cantos XV and XVI detail the trouble Godfrey goes through to get Rinaldo to come back. After Clorinda successfully burnt the siege machines, Ismen persuaded the devils and evil spirits to haunt the only nearby woods. Godfrey's people could not get rid of them. All of his heroes failed and finally, Godfrey had a dream. Peter the Hermit interpreted this dream as instructing Godfrey to send two men to find Rinaldo and bring him back. As much as Godfrey did not want to, he did what his advisor told him to do. Charles and Ubaldo seek out Dame Fortune, who tells them about Christopher Columbus and directs them toward Armida's palace. After many hardships, they arrive and find Rinaldo. They convince him to come back with them and even Armida cannot get him to change his mind. Armida is a woman scorned; she destroys her palace and returns to Jerusalem angry and thirsty for vengeance.

Part IV

The last section of *Gerusalemme Liberata* deals with the final four cantos of the poem which describe the final assault on Jerusalem and record the deaths of all the major Muslim characters. Canto XVII sets the stage for the last battle. The Muslims are massing, including the armies of the King of Egypt, and backed by Armida and Emiren they march towards Jerusalem. Armida even offers to marry any man who brings her the severed head of Rinaldo. Meanwhile, Rinaldo arrives in the Holy Land and receives Sven's sword. He even takes a tongue lashing from several priests for abandoning his fellow Christians. The tension continues to mount as the attack proceeds. Rinaldo defeats the spirits in the woods and the Christians are able to build their machines again. Without Clorinda, the Muslims do not have a prayer. The Christians attack the city and claim control over parts of the walls. They slaughter the troops hiding in Solomon's temple and plant the Cross on the city walls. Canto XIX details a pitched battle within the city itself. All of the major characters are accounted for: Tancred kills Argantes, while Rinaldo and Godfrey pursue Solyman and Aladine from the Temple Mount to the Tower of David. The battle is suspended because Godfrey's spies have informed him of the approaching Egyptian troops. One of the spies, Vafrine, rescues Erminia and they find Tancred, almost dead, near Argantes's body. Erminia nurses Tancred in a portion of the city that the Christians control. After the crushing defeat of the Muslims in the following canto, Rinaldo and Armida declare their love for each other, she is baptized, and their engagement is announced.

Canto XX is the resounding crashing end to the battles and to the poem. The Egyptian and the Christian troops face each other and wreak great havoc on each other. Solyman attacks the Christians from the rear and kills a number of them. Tancred rallies the Christians and Solyman is killed by Rinaldo. Tancred and his group take the Tower of David and Aladine is killed. Godfrey pursues the Egyptian general and kills him as well. The battle is over, the Christians have liberated Jerusalem. Godfrey hangs his weapons in Solomon's Temple.

Book 1

Book 1 Summary

This epic poem tells the story of a Christian attempt to free the holy city of Jerusalem from Muslim control. The individual stories of several heroes from both sides are interwoven with the main plot, all developing the theme of Christian moral, military, and spiritual superiority.

The poet introduces his story, the freeing of Jerusalem by Christians. He invokes the help of the poetic muses, and briefly relates the history of Christian crusades against the "tyrants" (interpreted to be Muslims). He then begins his story by saying God looked down at several Christian heroes and sent the Angel Gabriel to the most holy, a man named Godfrey. Gabriel tells him the time has come for him to gather the Christian lords of Europe and free Jerusalem. Godfrey sends messengers to his allies, who gather and agree to join him. After the poem describes the election of Godfrey as the army's leader, the army of each ally is described at detailed length, with particular attention being paid to Tancredi and Rinaldo. The combined armies raise Christian flags, then Godfrey makes a speech of inspiration, and the following day at sunrise the Crusaders depart.

Meanwhile, the Muslim ruler of Jerusalem, Aladine hears of the Crusaders' coming and considers slaughtering all the Christians currently living in the city. Cowardice prevents him from doing so out of fear of the revenge he believes the Christians will take on HIS people. He does, however, destroy the Christians' homes and blocks their wells. He then fortifies Jerusalem with three mighty walls.

Book 1 Analysis

For centuries, most intensely in the Middle Ages, Muslims and Christians fought over control of Jerusalem, an important city to both faiths. European Christians made frequent attempts to cleanse it of Muslim influence, attempts that history now calls The Crusades, in which massive armies understood they were on a mission from God. This idea is portrayed in the poem's opening lines, in which Godfrey receives his (literal) marching orders from God. In any case, the Crusades, the spiritual reasons for undertaking them, and heroic stories using them as a context for lectures and demonstrations of Christian morality and values were all popular themes for epic poetic narratives, of which *Gerusalemme Liberata* is one of the most notable.

Another important historical element is the fact that Christians of both the time in which the poem is set and the time in which it was written referred to Muslims in derogatory terms, with pagans, infidels, tyrants, and heathens being the terms occurring most often in both historical and literary documents. Muslims are, in the Christian perspective of the time, anti-Christian and anti-God. This is the reason for the poem's thematic and moral perspective on the supremacy of Christianity and the righteousness of Christian

conquest, and is also the reason for its repeated and virulent attacks on the Muslim character, as exemplified in this section by the vicious comments and cowardly reactions of Aladine and by the poet's attitude towards him. This perspective is also defined through repeated use of imagery that sees the Christians portrayed in terms of light, brightness, strength, courage and honor, while the Muslims are portrayed in terms of darkness, stealth, duplicity, cowardice, and fear.

Finally, the detailed description of the armies, of their leaders and their armor, is typical of this kind of poetry. There is equal detail on both sides, an example of the light/dark imagery mentioned above - both sides are strong and courageous, but the Christians are described in terms that leave no doubt that they are in the righteous service of God. The Muslims, on the other hand, are described in equally certain terms that they are in the service of evil.

It is important at this point to make a brief note about the poetic style and structure of the writing. Each book consists of several verses, with each verse consisting of eight lines. The first six are written with a repeated A-B rhyming scheme, while the final two are written in a couplet with a different rhyme, C. The narrative value of this scheme is that the first six lines develop a situation, while the final two lines sum up the situation and/ or make a comment on that situation, and/or move the narrative onto the next stanza.

Book 2

Book 2 Summary

On the advice of a sorcerer, Aladine steals a large, ornate statue of the Virgin Mary from a church and locks it in a temple (probably a mosque). The following morning the statue has disappeared, and the poet says the Hand of God took it away and kept it safe. Aladine furiously raids all the Christian homes in Jerusalem in search of the statue, destroying all other Christian statues and monuments in his wake. The poet compares his actions to those of the Biblical Herod who, upon hearing that a savior (Christ) had been born, sent his armies through Israel with an order to kill all the male children.

A beautiful young Christian woman named Sophronia confesses to having stolen the statue, and faces execution. Because her claim is a lie, the poet compares her actions to those of Christ, in that they both sacrificed themselves to save others - in Sophronia's case, she is sacrificing herself to save her fellow Christians. Just as the flames for Sophronia's burning are about to be lit, her beloved, Olindo, rushes forth and confesses to the crime. Aladine commands that they both be killed. Another fire is built, and just as that one is about to be lit a renowned female warrior named Clorinda steps forward, offering her belief that the lovers are innocent. She vows to serve Aladine faithfully if he allows them to go free. Aladine, who has heard of Clorinda's valor and battle skills, agrees to her terms. Sophronia and Olindo are set free and flee the city in the company of other Christians.

Meanwhile, a pair of messengers from the King of Egypt arrives at the camp of Godfrey and the Crusaders. Argantes and Aletes warn of the dangers the Crusaders will face, both in Jerusalem and from the Egyptian army, and advise them to turn back. As the other lords become angry, Godfrey thanks the messengers for their concern, but he and his forces are resolved to continue and will gladly meet the armies of Egypt should they be brought against them. The messengers become angry and leave. As night falls, the Crusaders find themselves excited about the battle that will soon begin and are unable to sleep.

Book 2 Analysis

The two sections of Book 2 serve to contrast the opposing forces - the dark villainy of the Muslims and the righteous determination of the Christians. Sophronia's and Olindo's attempted sacrifices reinforce the holiness of the Crusader's cause, while the suggestion that Aladine is susceptible to advice from a practitioner of black magic reinforces the idea that he is in league with the forces of Satan. Again, the point must be made that the negative view of Muslims was the social, moral, and literary perspective of the time, giving the poem an air of pro-Christian, anti-Muslim propaganda that would, in many contemporary circles, be considered inappropriate.

A key element in this section is the introduction of the female warrior Clorinda. Aside from the fact that her appearance here and her apparent influence over Aladine both foreshadow her importance to later narrative developments, her presence in the story is surprising, given the culture and society in which the poem was written and set. In both time periods, female warriors were an extreme rarity. Women in both periods were, in general, treated and viewed as property, useful only for their value in breeding offspring and/or bringing land or money into a marriage. The fact that a woman is given the opportunity to participate in a battle, let alone that hr prowess is recognized by a ruler, is something quite remarkable.

There are echoes here of Joan of Arc, the famous French visionary soldier and heroine, but it must be remembered that Clorinda fights with the Muslims. In the intensely pro-Christian context of the poem, there is perhaps the suggestion in this character that allowing a woman to fight is as sacrilegious as getting advice from a sorcerer. This idea is reinforced by the fact that later in the poem (Book 12) it is revealed that she was born neither a warrior nor a Muslim; the suggestion being that she has grown into a life alien to her true nature (i.e., a submissive Christian woman). The idea is further reinforced later in that same book when, after being defeated by a Christian and lying nearly dead, Clorinda renounces both her warrior status and her faith. This perspective is balanced, but only to a point, by the appearance in the poem's final book of a female Christian warrior; but, overall, there is the strong sense in this key character that her story is a variation on the poem's overall theme of the inevitability of Christian triumph.

Clorinda is a vivid and deliberate contrast to Sophronia's apparent nature as a gentle woman of Christian peace and sacrifice. There is the sense throughout the poem that Sophronia's attitudes and actions are in fact ideals of Christian womanhood, given that all the other female characters (with the aforementioned exception of the female Crusader) eventually convert to a similarly submissive, Christian type. This is the poem's apparent, and rather sexist, attitude towards women in general. Again, however, it must be remembered that this attitude was very much that of the time in which the poem is both written and set.

Book 3

Book 3 Summary

The Crusaders march on Jerusalem, where their first attack, led by Tancred, is met by a defensive charge led by Clorinda. Aladine watches this first battle from high in a tower. Erminia, the pagan beloved of Tancred first referred to in Book 1 accompanies Aladine. As soon as they see each other, Tancred and Clorinda are instantly mutually attracted, and as the battle rages around them, they vow to not hurt or kill each other. A battle-crazed soldier, never identified as being from one side or the other, strikes blindly at Clorinda and wounds her. As she flees the battle scene to get first aid, Tancred slaughters the soldier and follows her. Meanwhile, Argantes (the Egyptian messenger fighting on the Muslim side) rides at the head of an army of reinforcements. At the same time, Erminia points out the various warriors fighting on the Christian side, including the fierce Renaldo who angrily attempts to take revenge on Argantes for killing the noble Dudon. Godfrey, watching the battle from a mountaintop, calls a retreat. Renaldo reluctantly agrees, the troops withdraw, and Dudon is both extravagantly mourned and ceremoniously buried.

Book 3 Analysis

The confrontation between Christian and Muslim begins in literal, military terms in this book, as opposed to the conflict in previous books that has been presented in a more metaphorical and thematic tone. The battle scenes are described in significant but not gory detail, with several confrontations given particular attention. Most noteworthy of these is the battle between Tancred and Clorinda, an example of the proverbial "love at first sight." There are vague echoes here of the similar relationship between the Greek warrior Hercules and the legendary Amazon queen Hippolyta, who also met in battle and who were also instantly attracted to one another.

Meanwhile, it is interesting to note that while Erminia watches the battle and seems able to pick out warriors on the Crusaders' side very easily and describes them in detail, she does not seem to notice what is going on between the man she supposedly loves and this renowned female warrior. It is also interesting to note that this love triangle never really plays out in expected ways - Erminia and Clorinda never become aware that they are both loved by Tancred, while Tancred never experiences any sense of being torn between the two women. In the cases of both women, the poet seems more interested in defining them as converts to both Christianity and submissive womanhood than as Tancred's love interests.

The almost excessive grief shown by the Crusading warriors for the fallen Dudon is typical of poems of this sort chronicling righteous Christian war. In most such poems, the sacrifice of such warriors is always perceived as the greatest and noblest a warrior can make, having been made in the service of God. The reward of those killed is

automatically a place in heaven; the warriors left behind vow revenge, and that revenge is always achieved.

Book 4

Book 4 Summary

Satan gathers all the devils and monsters and demons of Hell, and urges them to join with him and do everything they can to defeat the Christian crusade. As the demons go out into the world, an aged sorcerer named Hidraort discovers that he cannot foresee who will win the battle over Jerusalem, but worries what will happen to him if the Christians win. As he considers what to do to prevent that from happening, Satan gives him an idea - send his beautiful niece Armida as a distraction. Hidraort thinks this is a good idea, and instructs Armida to focus her attention on Godfrey.

Armida journeys to the Christian camp, and as she makes her way to Godfrey's tent, the men of the army all become immediately attracted to her. This is particularly true of Eustace, Godfrey's younger brother, who escorts Armida to Godfrey's tent. There she tells a long story of how she is a princess, how an evil prince has overthrown her country, and how she narrowly escaped being married to him. She says she's come to plead for Godfrey's help in winning back her kingdom. Godfrey considers, and finally decides that it would be unwise to leave the current battle, saying that once the battle is complete he'd be happy to help her. Eustace suggests that he could lead a small portion of the army to help Armida, saying its absence would barely be noticed. Godfrey agrees, and preparations are made. Meanwhile, Armida spends more time in the camp, distracting all the soldiers.

Book 4 Analysis

The likeness of Muslims to Satan is drawn most vividly here, as Satan and his forces are established as having clearly parallel goals to those of Aladine and the Muslims. The episode of Hidraort and Armida particularly reinforces the notion that Muslims are aligned with the so-called forces of darkness, the tempting power of which is dramatized by the way Armida captivates Eustace and so much of the rest of the army. Their enchantment with her foreshadows later developments, when several soldiers ride off to serve her and are eventually enslaved.

A question that arises at this point is whether it is the particular intent of the poem to portray women in general, through the specific characters of Clorinda and Armida, as being aligned with the dark forces. With the previously discussed exception of the little utilized female Crusader in Book 20, all the female characters in the poem are portrayed as starting as enemies. Even the loving Erminia, in a story recounted here, begins life as a Muslim. Just because she is converted by the time the story begins does not mean she did not start out evil.

In any case, like the pervasively negative perspective on Muslims and a negative attitude towards women can be seen again as being consistent with that of both the

time in which the poem was written and the time in which it is set. Women were treated not only as property but also as tempting agents of Satan, able to distract men from their noble purposes. This characteristic is apparent in both Clorinda and Armida, even though they have markedly different techniques - Clorinda distracts with violence and courage, Armida distracts with sensuality. The negative attitude towards women is reinforced later in the book by the apparent thoughts of the character Valfrine, whose initial reaction when encountering the repentant Erminia is colored by his general mistrust of her gender.

Book 5

Book 5 Summary

Godfrey announces that before any decision is made about who will accompany Armida, a replacement for Dudon must be chosen. Eustace assumes Godfrey will want him to do it, and tries to talk Renaldo into seeking the position because he (Eustace) wants to go with Armida. Renaldo refuses, saying if Godfrey wants to give the assignment to him he will take it but that he will not pursue the assignment on his own accord. Meanwhile, narration describes how a Norwegian prince named Gernando allows himself to be tempted by the dark voices of jealousy and ambition whispering in his ear; he decides he wants to be Dudon's replacement, assumes Renaldo was going to get the job, and speaks badly about him around the camp. Renaldo's hot temper gets the better of him, leading him to challenge the much less able Gernando to a duel in which he kills Gernando. Several lords and soldiers demand that he be punished. Even though eloquently Tancred pleads for mercy, Godfrey decides that Renaldo must indeed be tried. Before that trial can begin, however, Renaldo leaves the camp, dreaming of the victories he will achieve on his own, personal Crusade.

Meanwhile, Armida is still working her dark magic on the army and distracting more and more lords from their duty. Even though she is unable to have any effect on Godfrey or Tancred, the others become more insistent that they be allowed to leave and help her. Godfrey finally randomly decides on ten lords to accompany Armida and advises them to be careful, hinting that even vulnerable "pagans" like Armida can be untrustworthy. The departing lords pay no attention, and follow Armida out of the camp. Eustace, who resents not being chosen, rides in pursuit and tries to take the place of Rambaldo, the leader, at the head of the procession with Armida. They nearly come to blows, but Armida comes between them and chooses Eustace as her favorite.

Back at camp, Godfrey receives two pieces of bad news - an army from Egypt is approaching, and a supply convoy has been captured. Word of these setbacks spreads rapidly through the camp and Godfrey attempts to counter it with words of inspiration.

Book 5 Analysis

This section continues to dramatize the play's thematic perspective of Muslims, personified here by Armida, as being evil and dangerous. A key question arising from the events here is whether Gernando becomes over-ambitious as a result of Armida's presence. It is never stated outright that this is the case, but given that she is in camp when the confrontation with Renaldo occurs it would not be too much of a leap of deduction to suggest this is what happens. She is clearly a powerful sexual temptress, as indicated by the almost slavish devotion she inspires in the other soldiers, particularly in Eustace - the possibility that she is also a temptress in other ways is very strong. In

any case, the repercussions of Renaldo's departure and the enchanted relationship between Armida and the Crusaders accompanying her play out throughout the poem.

The final stanzas of Book 5, in which Godfrey receives not one but two pieces of bad news, is another typical aspect of this kind of pro-Christian propaganda/poem. Aside from operating on the basic narrative principle of the more challenging the obstacle, the greater the victory, the principle in poems of this sort is more specific - the greater the Anti-Christian obstacle, the more glorious the Christian victory and therefore the more effective the propaganda.

Book 6

Book 6 Summary

As an unexpected supply train arrives at the Christian camp, Aladine builds more fortifications around Jerusalem. When Argantes, one of the Egyptian messengers, calls him cowardly, Aladine reminds him that he is older, wiser, and more experienced, and then says he is stalling until reinforcements can arrive from another Muslim king, Soliman. Argantes, who is jealous of Soliman's power and influence, plots to gain some glory for himself and asks for leave to meet a Christian warrior in single combat. Aladine agrees, and sends a messenger with a challenge to Godfrey. Godfrey accepts the challenge, and assigns Tancred to the battle. Aladine, meanwhile, orders Clorinda to stand by, watch the fight, and be ready to ride in if the Christians show signs of treachery.

The appointed time of the battle arrives, and Tancred and Argantes ride out to challenge each other. Tancred immediately becomes aware of Clorinda, and is so distracted by her that Argantes becomes impatient. A young Christian named Otho impetuously rides out to challenge Argantes. Argantes kills him and tramples the body with his horse, proclaiming that this is what he will do to all the Christians. Tancred, guilty and embarrassed that an innocent died because of his indecision, rides out and confronts Argantes. They fight furiously, with their battle lasting into the night. Advisors from both sides urge them to call a truce, and they reluctantly agree to meet again six days later.

Erminia, who has watched the battle from high in her tower, worries about Tancred. Narration explains that she fell in love with him after he conquered her kingdom but treated her and her belongings with immense respect, eventually freeing her. Alone in her chamber, Erminia reflects on her love and on her friendship with Clorinda, who left armor in her (Erminia's) room as a token of her friendship. Erminia then disguises herself as Clorinda, leaves the city, travels nervously into the Christian camp, and sends a message to Tancred that she has come to help him. A Christian lord, whose father was killed in battle by Clorinda, recognizes the armor and attacks. Erminia is forced to flee. The lord sends word to Godfrey, and the rumor quickly spreads that Clorinda was on a secret mission. Meanwhile, Tancred rides off in pursuit of Erminia.

Book 6 Analysis

In the first part of this book, it is significant that Clorinda again shows up as a distraction. This reinforces the previously discussed idea that the pro-Christian poem is taking a generally anti-female perspective. The idea of "woman as distraction" is developed further as the result of the actions of Erminia, with her appearance in the Christian camp serving not only to distract the soldiers with rumor, but also distracts Tancred, who rushes off to pursue her.

Aladine's reference to Soliman foreshadows the latter's arrival with a large army of reinforcements later in the book, while, following several complications, the battle between Tancred and Argantes concludes in Book 19.

Book 7

Book 7 Summary

Soon after fleeing the Crusaders' camp, Erminia becomes lost and spends a lonely, cold, and hungry night in the woods. The following morning she comes across the humble home of a hospitable Old Man, who tells her how he used to be a warrior but left that life for one of peace and quiet in the forest. He, his wife and his sons welcome her into their family, and she happily moves into the life of a shepherdess.

Meanwhile, as Tancred searches in vain for Erminia, he encounters a patrolling knight who offers to give him shelter and rest. Tancred accepts, but when he comes to the castle where the knight is quartered, he (Tancred) discovers it belongs to Armida. He is challenged by one of the knights who left the Crusaders' camp earlier and who has betrayed the Crusaders' cause. The two warriors fight viciously, and eventually the traitor turns and runs into Armida's castle. Tancred pursues him, the drawbridge closes behind him, and he is taken prisoner.

Back in Jerusalem, Argantes is becoming more and more angry and impatient, waiting for his battle with Tancred to resume. He rides out to the battlefield and calls out a challenge. Godfrey asks his remaining knights for a volunteer to meet the challenge. The elderly Raymond steps forward, embarrassing the younger Crusaders. Godfrey gives Raymond his blessing, and from Heaven God sends an angel to protect him.

Raymond rides out to confront Argantes. As before, Clorinda and a group of soldiers watch from a hilltop. The battle is intense, with the angel stepping in several times to protect Raymond, and with Argantes marveling each time at how he survives. Raymond finally knocks Argantes' sword out of his hand, and at first is tempted to do the gentlemanly think and allow him to get another one, but reconsiders and rides past him in an assault on Aladine's forces. An archer fires an arrow at him, but the angel deflects it. The archer's attack, however, is a clear violation of the rules of war, and the Crusaders attack. Clorinda and her warriors respond, Godfrey leads his warriors well, and a full-scale battle begins, raging into the night. A vicious storm arises and the Christians are driven back, and their camp is destroyed by wind and rain.

Book 7 Analysis

The first element of note in this section is the contrast in the different welcomes received by Erminia and Tancred - the former is embraced, the latter is trapped. It is never explicitly mentioned in the text, but there are indications that there is symbolic value to this contrast, with Erminia's welcome representing that offered by Christianity, and Tancred's "welcome" representing that offered by Islam. The fact that Erminia encounters a shepherd supports this idea, given that Christ in the Bible is referred to as "the good shepherd." The additional facts that the Shepherd here practices the so-called

"Christian values" of charity, humility, and poverty supports this thesis further, with the fact that Erminia gratefully accepts the duties and responsibilities of a shepherd suggests that she is on her way to converting to Christianity.

The contrasting negative aspects of Tancred's welcome are quite self-evident. He is betrayed by the first warrior he encounters, and the second is both a traitor and a coward. Once again, the implication is that "pagans," the followers of Islam, are treacherous, immoral and evil. Even the moat around Armida's castle is described as being foul and full of sludge, creating the impression that anyone who lives there is literally surrounded by wickedness.

Other noteworthy elements here can be found in the encounter between Raymond and Argantes, with the appearance of the Angel again defining the Crusaders as "the good guys" doing God's work. At the same time, the sequence of events that begins with the archer's inappropriate firing of the arrow and concludes with the manifestation of the destructive storm defines the "pagans" as aligned with dark forces without honor.

Books 8 and 9

Books 8 and 9 Summary

Book 8 - The following morning, the storm passes, and "the pagans" send an evil spirit (Alecto) into the Crusaders' camp to spread discontent. At the same time, a messenger arrives with news that the Prince of Norway, journeying to join the Crusade, was killed in a battle with pagan forces. As Godfrey and his warriors grieve, a group of Italian warriors returns from an expedition to search for food with the news that they found Renaldo's armor and dismembered body. As the Crusaders grieve even more, one of them (Argillan) becomes angry and demands that Godfrey take immediate and violent revenge. As several Crusaders voice their agreement and even prepare to go into battle, Godfrey prays for guidance. He then arms himself and speaks to the Crusaders, convincing them that they must serve the greater cause of God's mission, not the lesser cause of revenge. The Crusaders put down their weapons and Godfrey resumes planning for his next assault, which he anticipates will happen within two or three days.

Book 9 - Alecto visits the pagan king Soliman (last referred to in Book 9 as the provider of reinforcements) and inspires him to journey to Aladine's aid. Soliman travels quickly, accompanied by a large army and his six sons, all of whom are killed in the initial assault on the Crusaders' camp. The poet comments on how Soliman continued to fight even after the deaths of his offspring, suggesting he has a heart of metal or stone. Meanwhile, the Angel Michael is sent from Heaven to fight on the side of the Crusaders. Michael visits the pagans and warns them that their resistance is futile, but the determination of the pagans, led by Argantes and Clorinda, is re-ignited rather than extinguished and the battle resumes. Argillan is released from prison, and fights viciously in support of the Crusaders. He kills one of Soliman's favorites, a beautiful young man, and is in turn hacked to bits by the vengeful, grieving Soliman. Godfrey enters the battle and kills several pagans, leading Soliman to call a retreat. At first Argantes and Clorinda refuse to obey him, but they eventually join the withdrawal. Soliman vows to return, even stronger.

Books 8 and 9 Analysis

The battle between Christian and pagan moves onto a different, more metaphysical plane as two angels enter the battle in opposition to each other - Alecto, an angel of evil, and Michael, an angel of good. It is interesting to note that Alecto is female, a fact that can be seen as yet another reinforcement of the poem's general "female as evil" perspective. The angel Michael, in the Bible, is the angel who directly fought the Devil and sent him to hell, making him a more aggressive angel than Gabriel, who delivered God's message, or the nameless angel who defended Raymond. Michael is the big gun. His presence suggests that the battle is beginning to go very badly for the Crusaders, an idea reinforced by the fact that Godfrey takes a much more active role in the battle than he has previously. His appearance here foreshadows his appearance at the play's

climax in Book 20, when he reassures Godfrey that the tide of battle is turning in his favor.

A great deal of Book 8 is taken up with the account of the Prince of Norway's death, yet another example of how the ideal of Christian sacrifice pervades the story and manifests in several aspects. In this case, within the religiously military context of both the poem and the culture of the time in which it is set, the Prince's determination to fight on in the face of overwhelming odds exemplifies that ideal. Also, there is again a juxtaposition between "Christian" and "pagan" values, with the Prince's story contrasted with both the spirit of evil sent forth by the pagans at the beginning of the book and Argillan's desire for revenge, presumably and apparently inspired by that spirit. Finally, the necessity for staying with the true faith is exemplified by Godfrey, through his apparent connection with God, the virtues of his carefully considered leadership, and his careful planning.

It's interesting to note that Soliman, by the end of Book 9, is exhibiting quite similar characteristics, although because he is fighting on the "wrong" side his determination and conviction are less noble. With that being said, his vow is still good storytelling, building both momentum and anticipation as the action moves into the next book.

Books 10 and 11

Books 10 and 11 Summary

Book 10 - Soliman leaves the field of battle, wounded and discouraged. He leaves for Egypt, whose king has promised reinforcements. That night, he encounters a mysterious Old Man, who reveals that he is a mystic and a seer named Ismen, and that he can guide him to Aladine. Soliman goes with him. After mystically healing Soliman's wounds, Ismen takes him in his chariot to Jerusalem where he is made invisible. Soliman is then led into Aladine's council chamber, and overhears the argument as Argantes tries to convince Aladine to continue to fight. After hearing Argantes speak negatively about him, Soliman asks Ismen to make him visible. Ismen does as he is asked, Soliman steps forward and speaks aggressively in favor of continuing to fight. Aladine surrenders his throne to him and Clorinda (who is also in the room) accepts his leadership, but Argantes is unhappy.

In the Crusaders' camp, Godfrey is in the middle of burying the dead from the last battle when Tancred and a group of the warriors who followed Armida return, explaining with embarrassment that they were bewitched by love, transformed briefly into animals, and threatened with permanent transformation if they did not renounce their Christian faith. Godfrey is told how they were all thrown into prison, chained, and sent to become the slaves of the King of Egypt, but were rescued by Renaldo, who is apparently alive. Peter, the wise hermit and seer who last appeared in Book 1, reveals that the remnants of Renaldo's body and armor found earlier were in fact crafted by women's deceit, that Renaldo does indeed live, and that he's destined for even greater success and renown. The Crusaders rejoice, but Godfrey's own happiness is tempered with caution - as the rest of the camp sleeps he lies awake, planning and considering.

Book 11 - Godfrey orders that his entire army attend a worship service before the next assault on Jerusalem. The bishops and priests with whom the army travels wear their most elaborate robes as the sacramental and prayerful rituals are performed. As the ceremonies take place, the "pagans" behind Jerusalem's walls shout taunts and abuse, but the service continues regardless. Following the service, Godfrey announces that there will be a major assault the following day, and the Crusaders must spend the remainder of the day in rest and contemplation. The morning of the attack, Raymond visits Godfrey as he is preparing for the assault, and discovers he is wearing only light armor. Raymond says he must protect himself better, since the Crusaders need their leader, but Godfrey confidently tells him he has faith that God will protect him. The assault begins, and the poem describes in detail the Crusaders attack, the pagans' defense, and Clorinda use of her skills at archery to kill several attackers. Godfrey is wounded, and retreats to his tent to have his injury treated. As the battle continues without him, Argantes shouts taunts from behind the walls constructed by Aladine. Godfrey soon returns to the battlefield, but night is drawing in and Godfrey calls a retreat. The assault tower the Crusaders constructed is badly damaged, but carpenters work through the night to repair it.

Books 10 and 11 Analysis

In Book 10, there are once again multiple parallels in events and characterizations. These include "good' sage Peter interacting with Christians while "bad" sage Ismen interacts with the pagans, "good" warriors returning to the Crusaders' fold while "bad" warrior Soliman returns to that of the pagans, and the pledging of loyalty by "good" soldiers to Godfrey and "bad" soldiers, led by Clorinda, to Soliman. There is also a renewal of faith in their mission and determination to accomplish it on both sides. Another, less obvious parallel relates to the physical wounds suffered by Soliman and the spiritual wounds suffered by the returning warriors, both of which are healed (at least to some degree) by reunions with their respective armies

There are a few relatively small but nonetheless important details here. The reference to Renaldo foreshadows his return in Books 14 through 16. Also, the reference to the returning Crusaders having been turned into animals resembles the Classical Greek story of *The Odyssey*, in which warriors returning from the Trojan War were turned into animals by the pagan sorceress Circe. The point is not made to suggest the author of this poem stole the idea, but to indicate that many stories in many cultures contain similar images, themes, or dramatic incidents. This indicates that, on some level, the experiences of the characters involved in such motifs are archetypal manifestations of a universal human condition. In this case, transformation into animals suggests that captives are being reduced to their most base nature in captivity. In the pro-Christian context of this poem, therefore, this story reinforces not only the idea that pagan forces are aligned with dark magic, but that to be under the influence of those forces is to become animalistic.

Armida's dark magic is contrasted both vividly and pointedly with the purity and holiness of the religious service described in such fervent detail in Book 11. Once again, the Christian cause is portrayed with reverence and a sense of destined righteousness in spite of jeering from the other side. This makes the thematic statement that living in and fighting for the Christian cause must proceed with no regard for the jeers of others, in the same way that Christ endured the taunts of the Romans and the Jews in the days before his Crucifixion. That being said, there is an interesting point made here about the difference between faith and over-confidence. It emerges as the result of the conversation between Godfrey and Raymond, in which Godfrey displays an almost arrogant or foolish over-confidence in God and is apparently punished by the wound he receives from Clorinda. He is, of course, too holy a man to be fatally wounded - the sense here is that God allowed him to be slightly wounded in order to teach him a lesson about hubris, or too much arrogance. It is possible that the deaths of the various Crusaders are also intended to bring home this "truth" even more dramatically, for both Godfrey and the reader.

Book 12

Book 12 Summary

That night, as the other members of the pagan army are tending to their wounds and resting, Clorinda is restless. She formulates a plan to go into the Crusaders' camp and burn down their assault tower. Argantes volunteers to accompany her, and Soliman, jealous of Argantes' reputation and eager for glory, volunteers to go as well. Clorinda firmly tells him he must remain and lead both the citizens and the army. Aladine agrees, embracing Argantes and Clorinda.

As Ismen prepares firebombs, Clorinda tells Aladine to take care of her slaves and servants, giving the indication that she believes she will die on this mission. Hearing her talk, her oldest slave decides it is time for her to know the truth of her origins. He tells her she, a white woman, was born to a black king and queen in Africa. He says the queen, because of the king's jealousy, was kept prisoner, and that her one comfort was a painting of a beautiful white maiden, apparently kept prisoner by a dragon, which in the painting, had evidently just been slaughtered by a nearby, bloodied knight. He also tells her how the queen feared for her (Clorinda's) life because she was white and told the slave to take her away, adding that as they fled a tiger nursed her. He says that is how she came to grow up in Egypt where she was reared as a pagan and a warrior, and finally pleads with her to fight no longer in the cause of a faith that was "repugnant" to that of her parents (Christianity). Clorinda tells her he will not change her faith now, and she prepares to depart on her mission.

Under cover of night, Clorinda and Argantes make their way across the battlefield and into the Crusaders' camp, where they throw Ismen's firebombs, watch as they explode, and attempt to hurry back to the city. It is not long before they are forced to fight their way through a band of very angry Crusaders. They make their way to the gates of the city, where Argantes is able to get through but Clorinda is left outside. She fights as best she can, but in the confusion she pretends she is one of the Crusaders and manages to slip unnoticed through their ranks, and flees. Only Tancred sees her go. He follows her, challenges her (without knowing she is the female warrior with whom he fell in love), and they fight through the night, causing each other increasingly serious wounds and becoming more and more fatigued. Finally, Tancred delivers a fatal blow and she falls, accidentally revealing her identity. As Tancred reacts with shock, Clorinda manages to whisper that she wants to be baptized and die a Christian. Tancred rushes to a stream, fills his helmet with water, and returns and baptizes her. After proclaiming her faith, Clorinda dies.

Tancred grieves so deeply that he comes close to killing himself, but other Crusaders discover him, calm him, take him back to camp, and treat his wounds. The following morning he again comes close to suicide, believing that the noble Clorinda's body has been left to be ravaged by wild beasts. He is reassured that her body has been brought to the camp, and when he sees it, he vows to ensure that a fitting tomb is built for her.

Back in Jerusalem, Argantes explains to his comrades and the people of the city that his attempts to go back outside the city gates and fight alongside Clorinda were prevented by Aladine. He vows to destroy Tancred in revenge for killing Clorinda, but narration recounts that Argantes' boasts were in vain, since he was eventually killed by Tancred.

Book 12 Analysis

There are two stories about Clorinda here, that of her childhood and that of her death. The latter is given meaning by the former. On the most obvious level, the stories combine to reiterate the poem's pro-Christian stance, showing through Clorinda's deathbed conversion how "the true faith" will always triumph. The more interesting aspect of this book is the way various layers of symbolism define and reinforce this interpretation.

The picture in the black queen's prison is clearly intended to be one of the Christian St. George, the patron saint of England. The legend recounting how George slew a dragon is a metaphor for the slaying of evil by Christianity, which means that the painting indicates that the queen was a closet Christian. This is supported by the slave's urging of Clorinda to accept her mother's "true faith." Another way this point is made is the way Clorinda was taken to safety in Egypt. This has echoes of both the Christ story, in which his parents fled with him to Egypt to protect him, and the Moses story, in which Moses was found by a princess of Egypt and reared to adulthood in safety. Further connections with both these stories can be found in the way Clorinda comes to a full realization of her true spiritual identity as an adult in the way both Christ and Moses do. Christ was baptized as an adult, as Clorinda is, while Moses realizes his true heritage and claims his identity as a prophet, also as an adult. Finally, the fact that Clorinda fights with Tancred for so long with her identity concealed, finally revealing it in the moments before she dies, makes the thematically relevant point that true identity is a Christian identity.

A key question that arises at this point is why Tancred's grief for Clorinda is so intense. There are several possible explanations - he grieves for the loss of a fellow warrior, he grieves for the loss of a love that never truly had a chance to become fully realized, he grieves for the loss of a Christian soul that would have been a great warrior for the true faith. None of these are mutually exclusive and all might be true. It is interesting to note, though, that Erminia, the other woman with whom Tancred is involved, is not mentioned once.

A second key question is why Clorinda is left outside the gates. The text does not make it clear whether Soliman makes a mistake and takes no steps to rectify it, or whether he makes a deliberate choice. Argantes' protests that he would have gone out if he had been allowed may or may not be true - he may be trying to cover his own tracks and pass the blame for his lack of action onto someone else. It is also possible that Soliman, angry with Clorinda for excluding him from the firebombing mission (which she does at the beginning of this book), vengefully and deliberately left her to her doom. The text never makes this point explicitly, but the possibility is there. This idea is reinforced by

Soliman's negative comments about the female Christian warrior Gildippes, in which he suggests his displeasure with female warriors in general. It is not hard to read into this comment a reason for his attitude towards Clorinda, and therefore his locking her out.

The final stanzas of this section, in which the boastful Argantes is described as meeting his death at Tancred's hands, is one of the few instances of such overtly prophetic foreshadowing in the entire poem.

Book 13

Book 13 Summary

One night, as Tancred grieves for Clorinda, Ismen goes into a nearby forest and casts several magic spells in an attempt to prevent Godfrey and his forces from using the trees to build a new siege tower. Later, the Crusaders attempt to do exactly that, but are repeatedly turned back by the apparent presence of evil spirits. One Crusader manages to get through, but then finds himself turned back by a blazing fire. Tancred, angry at himself for grieving so intensely and shirking his duty, goes into the forest and passes through the fire, only to encounter trees that speak to him and claim to be the imprisoned spirits of those Christians killed in battle. The "spirits," including Clorinda, claim that if he chops down the trees they will suffer and die all over again. Tancred tries to convince himself that what he is hearing is not real, but fails and returns to the Crusaders' camp without any wood. Then, for several days, the heat outside Jerusalem is torturously intense. Water and supplies become scarce, and several Crusaders come to believe God has abandoned them. As they themselves abandon the Crusade, Godfrey becomes aware of their departure, and prays to God for relief from the heat. God hears his prayer and sends rain, which replenishes both the earth and the soldiers.

Book 13 Analysis

The verses in this book develop an extended metaphor for the trials a Christian must endure to remain true to the faith. The fire represents physical dangers, the spirits represent fear and doubt, the false voices of the trees represent temptation, and the heat represents earthly suffering. The rain represents God's blessing, love and forgiveness, and can also be seen as a kind of baptism -- blessed water falling on those who sin and suffer, cleansing them of evil and awakening them to renewed faith and life in God.

Books 14, 15, and 16

Books 14, 15, and 16 Summary

These three books tell the story of the rescue of Renaldo.

Book 14 - That night, as the rain falls, Godfrey is visited by an angel, who first tells Godfrey he will live a long life in the service of God, and then instructs him to welcome Renaldo back into the Crusade. The spirits of two dead crusaders accompany the angel, and urge Godfrey to forgive Renaldo. Godfrey agrees, and sends two volunteers to search for him - Prince Ubaldo, a follower of the slaughtered Prince of Norway, and Guelpho, an ally who has been with the Crusade from the beginning. They are sent on their way with guidance from Peter, who advises them to seek out a fellow Hermit. They find him in a cave, where he speaks at length of his former pagan life and his conversion to Christianity, which he says manifests in his life as an awareness of the way God works in all nature - he knows the powers of herbs, he understands the wind and water, and can penetrate the mysteries of the past. He tells them Armida was behind the entrapment of the Crusaders (described in Books 7 and 10), and that in revenge for his role in freeing her prisoners, she enslaved Renaldo. Finally, he gives them a map of her maze-like home and a magical shield that he promises will free Renaldo, and urges them to rest.

Book 15 - The following morning, the Hermit leads Guelpho and Ubaldo to the magical boat that will take them most of their way. As the boat sets sail, Guelpho and Ubaldo are surprised to discover that the tiller is being handled by a beautiful young woman, who acts as a kind of tour guide, describing the various countries they pass on their four day journey. As they converse, she reveals that she has a similar faith to that of the Hermit - an awareness of, and connection to, God in nature. She deposits the two Crusaders on the shores of Armida's country, directs them to her castle, and then sets sail for her home. The Crusaders make the perilous journey to the castle, encountering several dangers, including a giant snake and a ferocious lion. They also encounter a beautiful pair of nude maidens bathing in a lake. The maidens tempt Guelpho and Ubaldo with their bodies, their smiles and their singing, but the soldiers pass on, unmoved.

Book 16 - Guelpho and Ubaldo follow the Hermit's map into the heart of Armida's castle, where they discover a beautiful garden populated with loudly singing birds, fragrant flowers, and fruit laden trees. Single-mindedly they pass by all temptations until they come upon Armida and Renaldo, who appear to be making love. When they finish and as Armida dresses, she renews her magical hold on Renaldo, soon departing to see to the running of the house. As soon as she's gone Guelpho and Ubaldo come forward and show Renaldo his reflection in the Hermit's shield. Armida's spell is broken, and Renaldo reacts with angry embarrassment when he learns how he has been trapped. Guelpho and Ubaldo explain he is needed back in Jerusalem, and Renaldo resolves to return.

As the three Crusaders are making their way out of the castle, Armida becomes aware that her lover is escaping and confronts them, attempting to manipulate Renaldo into staying. He definitely is tempted, but ultimately refuses, remaining resolved even when Armida faints. He and the others then leave. When she awakens, Armida furiously vows revenge. She magically makes the castle disappear and then flies to her real home, an even larger castle. There she blames her uncle (Hidraort, last referred to in Book 4 as the man who sent Armida on her mission to distract the Crusaders) for her suffering, vows to join forces with the King of Egypt to ensure the Crusaders are destroyed, and then journeys to aid Soliman.

Books 14, 15, and 16 Analysis

In these three sections, this very pro-Christian poem tells a quest story, a form of narrative that appears in virtually every spiritual and/or cultural tradition, including many non-Christian ones. Here as in other such stories, bold but troubled heroes undertake a journey in search of an object or person, encounter both allies and obstacles, and, after considerable difficulty, achieve their goal. Such stories can generally be interpreted as extended metaphors for the quest for the true self, and include such varied tales as *The Wizard of Oz, The Odyssey, The Lord of the Rings*, the Scandinavian folk tale *The Kalevala,* and any number of fairy stories in any number of cultures.

In the case of this portion of *Gerusalemme Liberata*, there is one important variation on the quest story theme - in most such stories, the person on the quest is the one who discovers his/her true self. Renaldo completes the quest in Book 17, re-discovering his a true self clearly identified with the poem's pro-Christian stance. The quest begins, however, with other heroes helping him. Almost everything else about this story follows the archetypal pattern - the heroes set out, receive guidance from a wise mystic (the Hermit) and support from an unexpected source (the woman steering the boat), encounter increasingly challenging and often mystic obstacles (including the nude women), and face one last, seemingly insurmountable, challenge prior to escape. In this case, that challenge is the seductive attempts by Armida to get Renaldo to stay. Both his refusal and the virtuous ways in which Guelpho and Ubaldo defeat their obstacles and resist temptation dramatize the overall theme of the poem - the cause of Christ will triumph.

Revenge is another common aspect of quest stories, since what is being quested FOR is generally the jealously guarded property of another and that other is generally not happy that his/her prized possession is gone. Armida's determination to destroy the Crusaders, therefore, is a natural extension of her general nastiness well as the archetypal function of her character type. Meanwhile, her vows of revenge foreshadow her actions later in the poem as she joins forces with other "pagans" to attack the Crusaders.

An interesting twist on the poem's examination of Christianity is the almost Buddhist comments made by the Hermit and the Boat Woman about the all-pervasive and all unifying nature of God. In the time the poem was written, this would have been quite a

daring and revolutionary perspective, given that religion in general and the Christian religion in particular have elements suggesting that nature must be dominated rather than worked with.

Books 17 and 18

Books 17 and 18 Summary

Book 17 - The poet gives a brief history of the Egyptian empire, and then recounts how the Caliph (king) assembled armies from all over Africa and Asia with the goal of marching to defend Jerusalem from the Crusaders. Armida brings her own army, telling the Caliph that her personal mission and intention is to take revenge on Renaldo for his betrayal. The generals of several of the other armies vow to kill him on her behalf.

Meanwhile, Renaldo, Guelpho and Ubaldo arrive at the home of the Hermit, who welcomes them and urges Renaldo to forgive himself for falling under Armida's spell. Using a mystical shield as a kind of mirror of history, he shows Renaldo all his mighty ancestors, saying that he has a long and noble history to live up to. Renaldo takes courage from this lesson and eagerly returns to the Crusaders' camp, where Godfrey greets him and his rescuers.

Book 18 - Godfrey and most of the other Crusaders accept Renaldo's repentance, but Peter tells him he needs to both pray further and perform a penance, sending him into the enchanted forest to rid it of its spirits. After a long night of prayer and contemplation, Renaldo finds himself covered with dew and filled with renewed spirit. He then arms himself and journeys into the forest, where he encounters a spirit disguised as Armida. The spirit attempts to charm him into leaving the forest alone. When Renaldo resists, it transforms itself into a series of increasingly hideous monsters. Renaldo's resolve is firm and he destroys the spirit, returning to give the news to Godfrey, who immediately orders that a new siege tower be built.

While the tower is being constructed, a dove chased by a falcon falls into Godfrey's lap. He discovers that it is carrying a message from the Caliph to Aladine, saying that troops are on their way. Godfrey realizes there is no time to delay, and orders a siege to begin the following day. He also orders that a spy be sent into the advancing Egyptian army to find out how strong it is. Tancred volunteers his squire, Valfrine, who is clever at disguising himself. Valfrine departs eagerly as the pagans, aware that a new siege tower is being built, make hurried preparations to defend the city. These preparations include Ismen making a new supply of firebombs.

The following day, Godfrey and his armies attack Aladine's fortifications, their assault anchored by the siege tower and by the determination of the vengeful Renaldo. The description of the battle is lengthy and detailed as forces on both sides fight furiously. At one point, the Angel Michael appears to Godfrey, telling him the angels are fighting on the side of the Crusaders and that victory is inevitable. Soon afterwards, Godfrey and his forces break through Aladine's defenses.

Books 17 and 18 Analysis

These two books lay the groundwork for the poem's climactic confrontations in the books that follow. This happens on two levels, the literal and the symbolic.

The descriptions of the Egyptian army, the construction of the siege tower, the departure of Valfrine, and the penultimate battle function on the literal level. They build a dramatic sense of suspense as both sides of the battle bring numbers, determination and planning to bear. On the more thematic and/or symbolic level, several elements dramatize the Christian righteousness and power that will eventually win the war. The first of these can be found in the story of Renaldo's return to camp, with the image of his being covered in dew at the conclusion of his night of repentance and prayer continuing the previously discussed imagery of water, baptism and purification.

Meanwhile, his journey into the forest provides the conclusion of his quest story as he takes on the task of his own redemption, with the pseudo-Armida embodiment of both the evil of paganism in general and the particular effect of that paganism on Renaldo. By destroying the spirit, he destroys its hold over him and provides foreshadowing of the destruction of the army in the following books. There is also the possibility that he is somehow destroying its hold over Armida, who converts to Christianity late in the poem.

The second thematically relevant symbol in this section is the dove, which in Christian tradition is a symbol of peace and the Holy Spirit. The fact that it is chased into Godfrey's lap is less relevant than its bringing information that leads to victory. With the appearance of the dove, the poet is indicating Christian triumph is now truly possible and inevitable, an idea reinforced by the reappearance of the Angel Michael.

Books 19 and 20

Books 19 and 20 Summary

Book 19 - As the Crusaders surge through the city gates, Tancred encounters Argantes. They agree to continue their interrupted battle and withdraw to an isolated field some distance from the city, where they fight a protracted duel. Argantes is eventually killed, but Tancred is seriously wounded and falls unconscious. Back in the city, Raymond is also seriously wounded and nearly dies, but his soldiers defend him.

Meanwhile, Valfrine is making his way through the camp of the Egypt-led army. He sees how large it is, hears soldiers brag that Godfrey will be killed, and hears two warriors courting Armida boast that they will be the ones to kill Renaldo. Later, as Valfrine is courting some of Armida's maids in an effort to get information out of them, he is taken aside by one of them. She turns out to be Erminia, who recognizes him from the time she was Tancred's captive and reveals that she wants to help both him and the Crusaders any way she can. The poet explains that because of Armida's actions and of the duplicitous nature of women in general Valfrine is doubtful, but allows himself to be convinced and agrees to leave with Erminia.

As Valfrine and Erminia travel to the Crusaders' camp, they discover the almost dead Tancred. Erminia grieves over his body, but her tears revive him. She finds medicinal herbs and binds his wounds with her hair. Soon he becomes well enough to travel, and he, Erminia, and Valfrine complete the journey to the camp. When they return, they find Godfrey at the bedside of the wounded Raymond. Valfrine reports to Godfrey what he discovered, and Raymond advises that the final assault should begin on the following day. Godfrey agrees, and orders his men to rest.

Book 20 - The following morning, a giant cloud of dust raised by the advancing Egyptian army warns the Crusaders that battle is imminent. As they arm themselves, Godfrey rides through their ranks and speaks inspiring and encouraging words. The Egyptian commander does the same, and soon afterwards, the battle begins. The narrative follows several of its many fronts. A female Crusader, Gildippes, is the first to draw blood. She and her husband Edward fight hard and well, but are each eventually killed. Meanwhile, Renaldo fights furiously, eventually encountering Armida's two suitors and killing them both. Armida flees, Renaldo chases and captures her, and she confesses how truly and how deeply she loves him. He shows her mercy, they weep together, and Armida renounces her pagan faith. Also, Raymond is wounded, defended by Tancred long enough to recover, and then rejoins the battle. The Caliph, Aladine and Solyman are all killed. Finally, Jerusalem is liberated. Godfrey goes into the Christian church, removes his armor, and gives thanks.

Books 19 and 20 Analysis

An interesting element to note in this section is the introduction of a female warrior on the Crusaders' side, one described in terms that indicate she is at least as strong, and as skilled in battle, as her male counterparts. There is an unanswerable question of why she was not introduced earlier as a counterpart to Clorinda aside; however, the point must be made that her presence, to some degree, alleviates the poem's general anti-female perspective. On another level, however, it is too little too late - even as recently as Book 19, in the comments about Valfrine's automatic mistrust of Erminia, that perspective is still apparent.

Ultimately, however, the key purpose of these two books is to bring to a climactic close several of the poem's key elements. The most obvious of these is the main narrative thread, the battle for Jerusalem that reaches its inevitable conclusion. While the physical battle is obviously an extended metaphor for the spiritual battle of good (Christianity) versus evil (non-Christianity), it is important to note that the smaller, more intimate battles fought and won in this section, and indeed throughout the poem, are also metaphors for this battle. Tancred's victories, one over Argantes and the other being his Erminia-assisted victory over death, are two such metaphors. Another is the reconciliation between Renaldo and Armida, which is less about a union of lovers than it is a symbol of how Christian love conquers pagan evil.

There is some question at this point, as it has been throughout the development of the Renaldo/Armida story: what exactly are their motivations - is she a witch who fell in love in spite of herself? Did he fall in love as the result of his own attraction rather than solely as the result of her spells? Or are they merely functionaries, created and manipulated by the poet in order to once again dramatize the poem's theme? Answers to the first two questions are not supported by the text, but the answer to the third definitely is supported. There is clearly the sense that whatever Renaldo and Armida may have been motivated by as individuals, their function as enactors of the theme is more important - Christianity will always rightfully triumph, in every battle, in every relationship, in every situation. There is, after all, a reason why the leader of the Christian army is named "GOD-frey."

Characters

Aladine

Aladine is the commander of the Saracen army in Jerusalem. His position mirrors Godfrey's in that he does not do that much fighting, leaving it to Clorinda, Solymon, and Argantes. He is killed by Tancred.

Argantes

Argantes is the Saracen second in command. He challenges the Christian knights to single combat and defeats most of them. He almost kills Tancred, which spells certain doom for the Christians. However, Tancred rises from his sickbed, rallies the Christians, kills Argantes, and saves the day.

Armida

She is the witch of the poem. Summoned by Satan to seduce and destroy Godfrey, Armida eventually seduces and captures over 30 knights including Rinaldo and Tancred. The majority of her captives escape or are rescued, but Rinaldo has fallen in love with her and she with him. On her island paradise in the Atlantic Ocean, Armida and Rinaldo spend much of the poem living in love. After Rinaldo is "rescued," Armida swears revenge, even offering a reward to any Saracen knight that brings her Rinaldo's head. After the battle, she realizes that Rinaldo still loves her and she accepts both her conversion to Christianity and his offer of marriage. Although Tasso is not exactly clear about her use of sexuality, most English translators suggest that while she uses her sexuality to kidnap men, she only consummates the act with Rinaldo, thus making her an acceptable wife for him.

Clorinda

Clorinda is the Princess of Damascus, an Amazon, and the most pivotal character in the poem. She is the leader of the Saracen attack forces and is a ruthless fighter. She is a brilliant military strategist as well as a tough woman. As long as she is alive, the Christians cannot hope to take Jerusalem. Several Christian heroes fall to Clorinda's sword, as well as most of their battle plans. She manages to destroy all of Godfrey's wooden siege equipment, which almost spells defeat for the Franks, and would have continued to reduce his army, but she is killed by the man who desperately loves her. Tancred does not realize that he has killed Clorinda until it is too late. He baptizes her as she lies dying and then loses his mind. Clorinda allows the baptism because she found out that she was born a Christian, but raised a Saracen. However, this knowledge does not change her dedication to the Turkish cause nor her loyalty to the Saracen king

of Jerusalem. It is only after her death that Godfrey can gather his forces and defeat the Saracens.

Emiren

Emiren is the Saracen king of Jerusalem. He is killed by Godfrey.

Erminia

Erminia is the niece of the King of Antioch, who knows the Christian knights because they destroyed her city and killed her father and uncle before the poem opens. She tells the Saracen king who all the knights are in Canto II, thus introducing the characters to the readers. She is also desperately in love with Tancred. She watches his battles from the city walls and even tried to nurse him when he was wounded. She dresses in Clorinda's armor in order to sneak out of the city, but is recognized by the Christian guards and forced to flee without seeing Tancred. He follows her, but she escapes him. Their love affair is not resolved and her role as prize object or woman scorned is unclear.

Gildippe

She is the Christians' answer to Clorinda. Gildippe is a great Amazon warrior who, however, does not fight the Saracen Amazon, Clorinda. She is killed by Solymon.

Godfrey of Bouillon

Godfrey, modeled on the historical person, is one of the major characters in *Gerusalemme Liberata*. He is the French knight who is chosen by God and his fellow crusaders to lead the Christian armies against the Muslim Turks, called Saracens, who have taken Jerusalem. Godfrey does not actually fight in most of the battle, but rather directs the attacks and plans the siege. He is a character who has much in common with Thomas Malory's King Arthur and Homer's Agamemnon, which were two of Tasso's sources. Godfrey is the perfect Christian knight, in that he does not waver from his beliefs, yet will always obey the word of God. He banishes Rinaldo for murder, but when Peter the Hermit tells Godfrey that only Rinaldo can defeat the spirits in the demonized forest, Godfrey recalls him and forgives him of his sins. Godfrey does participate in the final battle that "liberates" Jerusalem. He kills the last Saracen general and hangs his weapons in Solomon's Temple, showing that he only flights for honor and God.

Peter the Hermit

Peter plays the role of mystic advisor, much like Merlin in Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. He advises Godfrey to recall Rinaldo. Throughout the epic, Peter delivers the word of God regarding the Christians' actions.

Rinaldo

Rinaldo is one of the major characters that Tasso inserted into his history of the First Crusade. Critics suggests that he is modeled on Tasso's patron at the time, Cardinal d'Este, and he is definitely one of the most important, heroic, romantic, and courteous characters in the poem. Rinaldo is a great warrior, chosen to succeed a fallen warrior as the leader of the calvary. After another knight spreads rumors about him, Rinaldo kills the man and is forced to flee Godfrey's camp. He is captured by Armida, who uses her magic to make him love her. They live happily in her enchanted garden for most of the poem, until Godfrey sends for him. Rinaldo is awakened from his magic spell and leaves Armida. His physical and spiritual strength allow him to defeat the Saracens and their allied demons. His love for Armida, however, is real and he convinces her of his passion. She then becomes a Christian and the poem ends with the plans for their wedding. Rinaldo, although not the leader of the Christians, is the only knight that can save the Christian army and get them to their goal.

Solymon

Solymon becomes the major Saracen warrior after Clorinda's death. He attacks and destroys the Prince of Denmark's army and does serious damage to the morale of the Christian troops. He also kills the great Christian warrior, Gildippe. He is killed by Rinaldo.

Tancred

Tancred is another Christian knight whom Tasso introduces to the First Crusade. He is a great warrior who loves Clorinda from afar. He worships her military ability as well as her beauty. He is captured by Armida, but escapes to lead the Christian army during Rinaldo's absence. After Clorinda has set fire to Godfrey's siege equipment and gets locked out of the city, Tancred flights this unknown warrior and kills her. Realizing his mistake, he is overcome by grief and is barely able to go on. He continues to fight for the Christians and lives through the horrific battle at the end of the poem. His affair with Erminia, however, is not resolved.

Themes

Honor as Combat

One of the major themes in *Gerusalemme Liberata* is the idea of honor, or what makes someone a good person. The major element of honor is the character's ability to fight. Generally this applies to the male characters, with the exception being the two Amazons, Clorinda and Grildippe, since women's honor had to do with their sexual reputation and not an ability to fight. Godfrey, Rinaldo, and Tancred are examples of good and honorable men because they are able to fight when called upon and they are fighting for the side of the Christian God. Although Clorinda flights for the Saracens, she is a Christian by birth and does renounce Paganism, that is, Islam, right before her death. For Solyman, Argantes, and Aladine, honor is not obtainable since they are the bad guys. Their military victories are described as murders, while the military victories of the Christians are considered honorable acts.

Religious Truth as justification

Tasso was writing his poem to a Christian audience who would not find anything wrong with his portrayal of the Muslims as pagans, Satan worshipers, or evil-natured brutes. The entire reason for Godfrey's attack on Jerusalem is the fulfillment of religious truth. From the moment Godfrey is nominated by God, the audience knows that Godfrey and the Christians are going to win. All of his actions, and those of his army, are justified by the truth of their religious beliefs. The question of whether they could be wrong does not even enter the picture. Tasso wants his readers to take the same surety that Godfrey and his comrades had and apply it to their own lives and struggles.

Transcendency of Love

In addition to the idea of religious truth, Tasso also emphasizes the idea of the transcendency of love. Love, as any good fairy tale says, conquers all and when love is mixed with honor and the "right" religion, it can be miraculous. Armida and Rinaldo discover that they truly love each other, even though she tricked him, he abandoned her, and she put a contract out on his life. She is willing to give up her religion, her powers, and her home for the man she loves, while he is willing to risk public scorn and humiliation for her. Even Tancred's relationships with Clorinda and Erminia display the all powerful aspects of romantic love. Tancred's affair with Clorinda may be one-sided, but it is enough to "save" her from eternal damnation to Hell, while Erminia displays the fidelity and faithfulness of, not only a good woman, but also that of Penelope, the model of wifely behavior. While Rinaldo and Armida announce their engagement at the end of the poem and Tancred is still mourning Clorinda, there is a suggestion that Erminia's love for Tancred and the idea of love in general will win in the end.

Might Makes Right

One of the major themes in almost every epic, whether poem or prose, is the idea of might establishing the rules. Whether this is the authors' intention or not, this theme seems recurrent throughout epic literature. Since the hero is the best fighter, by definition, his/her ability settles arguments and establishes how the society shall function. Godfrey gets to make the rules for how Jerusalem runs because he defeated the previous king. Aladine, the Saracen king, ruled Jerusalem and ran it his way. It is a simple matter of who is the better fighter. Tasso, as most epic authors do, makes his heroes absolutely the best, so there is no question of them being defeated, but none of these characters are able to legally or by any means other than feat of arms get what they want. So in the end, whether Tasso likes it or not, Military Ability (Might) makes the Rules (Right).

Style

Epic Features

In many ways, *Gerusalemme Liberata* is a perfect, rhetorically speaking, epic. Many of the dominant features found in Greek and Roman epics are found in Tasso. He uses the idea of a perfect hero, Godfrey and Rinaldo, who is the salvation of his group. There is the use of military ability, the intervention of the supernatural (God verus Satan), and the trip to the underworld with Rinaldo's supposed death and re-birth. Tasso was actively following the successful models of Virgil, Dante, and Ariosto as epic authors. In his *Discourses on the Heroic Poem* (1594), Tasso suggests that there are four major elements to epic poetry that must be followed by all epic poets: the story or fable, the morality of the characters, the purpose behind the story, and the language. All of these elements could be manipulated in the extreme, but they have to be present for an epic poem to work. Tasso's definition of epic elements basically survived until the twentieth century.

Point of View

The point of view is a traditional third person unlimited narrator. All the characters' minds, wants, desires, and fears are laid open by the narrator. This is an essential part of epic poetry during this time period. Since epic characters were created to serve as examples of proper behavior, the motives and actions of those characters had to be easy to understand. A first person narration of the action would not work effectively for Tasso's purpose. A third person narrator also lends an air of finality or absoluteness to the poem.

Setting

Gerusalemme Liberata is set in Palestine, what is now Israel and the Occupied West Bank. Tasso acknowledges that this area is the religious homeland of the three major monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, but he does not recognize the political nature of the First Crusade. Tasso's Jerusalem bears almost no resemblance to the real city. Solomon's Temple was destroyed in 79 CE by the Romans, while the Tower of David has been a ruin since ancient times. There is also very little description of the countryside or the city itself. This is not important in a heroic epic. For heroic poetry, the where is not as important as the how. The fact that all these men fight and fight bravely is all that matters. The idea that all these knights, Christian or Saracen, fight by the same rules and in the same way takes precedence over any debt to reality. Tasso himself suggested the limits of using a real historical event, but he could not find a storyline that he liked better to explore his ideas on morality and heroics.

Figurative Language

The language of *Gerusalemme Liberata* depends mainly on the translation being used. Since very few Americans, relatively speaking, read Italian, most Americans experience the poem in translation. In fact, *Gerusalemme Liberata* was one of the more frequently translated epic poems. The earliest complete translation into English was that of Edward Fairfax in 1600. Fairfax "Englished" the poem, translating it into English Heroic Verse (ABABABCC) and used English cultural references, metaphors, and allusions. The poem continued to be retranslated, with major editions by poets like Elizabeth Singer Rowe (1725), James K. King (1884), and Ralph Nash (1987). The Nash edition, the only one remaining in print, belongs to a group of translations from the late 1970s to mid-1980s that translated poetry into English prose. In doing so, a good deal of the poetic or figurative language is lost. Nash addresses this problem in his introduction. He states that he is more interested in preserving Tasso's story than his language and so chose to use prose, which is easier to read, and more like a narrative. Nash's translation is very readable and focuses on the storyline, but it does lose the fire and beauty of the earlier, poetic translations. The following examples from the Nash prose translation (1987) and the Fairfax poetic translation (1600) illustrate this point:

"Solyman, Solyman, reserve to a better time your
sluggish slumbers; for the country where you reigned
is yet a slave, under the yoke of foreign peoples. Can
you sleep on this earth and not call to mind that it
holds the bones of your unburied men? Where so great
a token of your shame remains, are you lazily awaiting
the new day?"
"O Soliman! Thou far-renowned king,
Till better season serve, forbear thy rest;
A stranger doth thy lands in thraldom bring;
Nice is a slave, by Christian yoke oppress'd;
Sleepest thou here, forgetful of this thing,
That here thy friends lie slain, not laid in chest,
Whose bones bear witness of thy shame and scorn,
And wilt thou idly here attend the morn?

The prose translation is easier to read and understand, but the poetic translation has a better rhythm and use of figurative language.

Historical Context

Italian Renaissance

Tasso is considered the last of the major Italian Renaissance poets. The Italian Renaissance, which began, traditionally, with the Fall of Constantinople in the fifteenth century, was a period of renewed literary, architectural, and artistic creativity that slowly spread across Europe. The Italian Renaissance launched artists like Michelangelo, Leonardo Da Vinci, and Titian; writers like Castiglione, Petrach, and Machiavelli; and artisans like Amati, the teacher of Stradivarius. There was a renewed sense of cultural identity, religious clarity, and pride in nationality. Literature was to be written in Italian rather than Latin. At the same time, educated people were to be knowledgeable about everything from art to warfare, from politics to dancing, and were expected to be able to express this knowledge and these abilities effortlessly. The Italian Renaissance collapsed under its own weight soon after Tasso died, ushering in the Baroque Period, but for its time, the Renaissance was the most important cultural, artistic, and political movement.

The Crusades

The Crusades were a series of military campaigns ordered by the then universal European Church in Rome against the ever-expanding Turkish/ Ottoman Muslim Empire between the eleventh and the sixteenth centuries. Although there were Crusades as late as the seventeenth century, the major Crusades were in the eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries. The First Crusade, called for by Pope Urban II in 1094, was arguably the most successful. The Ottoman Turks had captured Jerusalem and forced all pilgrims to pay travel taxes. The Turks were Muslim, a monotheistic religion similar to Judaism and Christianity, but for the Medieval Roman Catholic Church, the Muslims were just another group of pagans, like the Jews. Godfrey of Bouillon was selected to head the multinational force to re-take the city with the holiest of Christian shrines, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (Christ's tomb) and Mount Calvary (where Christ was crucified). The leaders of the First Crusade secured the cooperation of the Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire and so were able to invade Palestine and conquer Jerusalem. The city was quickly retaken by the Turks in the early twelfth century, thus launching the Second Crusade, lead by Philip of France and Eleanor of Aquitaine, and the Third Crusade, lead by Philip III of France and Richard I of England. However, by that time, the Crusades had deteriorated into European flights with the European kings making deals with the Turkish generals to betray one another. Throughout these military campaigns, the morality of killing thousands of people in the name of God was never addressed. The immorality and increasing length of the Crusades lead to a number of social, political, and religious reforms including the end of serfdom, the rise of the nation-state, and the Protestant Reformation.

The Renaissance Art Epic

The Renaissance Art Epic is a narrowly defined literary genre that involves a mixture of political and religious ideology with traditional heroic poetry and romance elements to express new ideas about life, social ideas, and religious truths. There are two basic types of Art Epics: Religious and Secular. The Religious Art Epic uses biblical or religiously based material as its starting point such as John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, while Secular Art Epics focus on heroic traditions or invented storylines like Ludvico Ariosto's *Orlando Furiouso* and Edmund Spencer's *The Faerie Queene*. The Renaissance Art Epic, regardless of its type, always uses old ideas about the heroic past like national pride, fighting ability, and the transformation of the hero through a death of some kind, wedded with elements of romance such as female characters, love (whether sexual or courtly), and the supernatural. The epics also usually used heroes out of the distant past whose stories could be manipulated and embellished. The point of Art Epic was to show contemporary readers how to live a true, honest, and productive life through historical example. It was also a place for the poet to display his (the overwhelming majority of authors were male) poetic skill in rhyme, rhythm, poetic imagery, and figurative language. The Art Epic fell out of favor as the dominant form of non-dramatic literary expression by the end of the eighteenth century, as novels became more popular to read at home. However, the poets who created the Renaissance Art Epic are still regarded as some of the best poetic crafters ever.

Critical Overview

Gerusalemme Liberata was a great critical success when it was published in 1581. Tasso was hailed as the greatest poet in all of Europe for combining the Heroic, the Romance, and the Moral tales in one poem. The early English translations spoke highly of Tasso's moral plan and his political allegory. Italian critics, who had originally hated the poem, claimed Tasso as the poetic successor to Dante and Virgil. This praise did not make Tasso happy, partly because he did not believe it and partly because he felt the poem had too much erotic and supernatural content. The poem did not provide Tasso with economic security because there were no notions of copyright, but its popularity did help secure Tasso the post of Poet Laureate of Rome in 1594. Tasso's reputation and the poem's critical impact continued to grow after his death.

The English poets seemed to be more heavily influenced by Tasso and *Gerusalemme Liberata* than were French, Spanish, or Italian poets. Edward Fairfax's translation in 1600 brought numerous new readers to the poem and poets such as Edmund Spencer, Rachel Speght, and Margaret Cavendish credited Tasso with teaching them how to write poetry. John Milton, Thomas Gray, and various Victorian poets continually referenced Tasso's work as a model for writing epic poetry.

The idea of the moral duty of the poet was very popular among literary circles in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and Tasso was regarded as the shining example of a poet with his readers' best interests at heart. Both French and English literary critics favored Tasso over Ariosto since Tasso's message of honor, truth, and victory through God's help seemed a better influence than Ariosto's tales of lust and sex. John Dryden preferred Tasso as an epic poet and recommended him to several young poets including Mary, Lady Chudleigh, John Oldham, and Anne Killigrew. Elizabeth Singer Rowe, the most popular epic poet in eighteenth century England, also recommended reading and translating Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* as a way of learning how to write epic poetry, both in terms of style and content.

The French critics were not as admiring as the English, however. Nicholas Boileau argued that, although Tasso was the master at instructing his readers, he found the didacticism too overpowering and the plot dull in places. He also did not like poetry with heavy moral messages, but he praised Tasso for his use of figurative language and the sustained cadence of his writing. Anne Dacier, a prominent French intellectual and translator of Homer's epics also liked Tasso's style and his use of language. She did not mind his use of real history since he chose a time and place unknowable to most of his audience and could, therefore, delight and instruct them without really telling them outright lies.

Gerusalemme Liberata continued to fare well in the eighteenth century and it continued to be translated and to influence other poets, holding a place in European Literary history as the finest Italian Art Epic. As the popularity of epic poetry declined in the nineteenth century, Tasso was still ranked among the most influential poets of the Renaissance, but his work was no longer read with the regularity it had been in the

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Tastes in poetry, especially epic poetry, were changing toward a more satirical view of the heroic Warrior Code. In the twentieth century, epic poetry was abandoned almost entirely as a genre, with critics like E. M. Tillyard arguing that epic poetry died with Milton's *Paradise Lost*. While Tillyard credits Tasso with creating a masterpiece, he dooes not consider *Gerusalemme Liberata* as a must read work. Recently, a new interest has developed among scholars in epic poetry. Critics like Barbara Lewalski and David Quint argue that epic poetry needs to be reread in social and political terms. They examine these aspects of Tasso's poem as do post-colonial theory critics, mining the poem for what Tasso has to say about the creation of empire and religious interaction between peoples. *Gerusalemme Liberata* has always been and will continue to be an influential poem and the finest example of the Religious Renaissance Art Epic.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4

Critical Essay #1

In the following essay, Rex explores how Tasso uses and manipulates images of femininity in traditional art epic terms.

Gerusalemme Liberata has rightly been called the finest Renaissance art epic written in terms of style, action, message, and characters. Torquato Tasso successfully combines elements of the heroic epic with elements of the medieval romance. One of his major contributions to the art epic are his female characters. Traditionally female epic characters fall into one of two kinds: the prize object and the Amazon. The prize objects are usually characters that are hyper-feminine; they cannot defend themselves, they are usually the reward for some heroic act by the male characters, and they provide the majority of the narrative action. The Amazons, on the other hand, tend to be women who cease to be women; they are warriors who refrain from anything feminine and fight, act, and generally behave just like men. Both prize objects and Amazons are incredibly beautiful. These definitions are open to numerous mutations, but the idea of women as the source of tension in epic literature is a predominant feature of the genre. While Tasso uses these types of female characters in his poem, he subtly twists these definitions, trying to give his women more credibility and human focus. Although these powerful characterizations of women are, in epic terms, evil, i.e. bad guys, they are redeemed by the power of love. Tasso's three main female characters, Clorinda, Erminia, and Armida, reshape the traditional definitions of epic femininity and recast the role of women in Renaissance society.

Clorinda is, perhaps, the most traditional of Tasso's women. She is the typical epic Amazon in that she dresses in armor, flights the enemy, and detests anything feminine. However, she is different from the Amazons in epic literature before her. She, unlike the Amazons in Boiardo's and Ariosto's epics, is on the wrong side. Clorinda is a Persian princess who arrives in Jerusalem just before Godfrey and his Christian knights lay siege to the city. Her reputation as a warrior proceeds her and the Saracens seem to have no problems with her taking command of the troops. This appears odd given Renaissance society's reluctance to view women as anything but silent, chaste, and obedient. However, at the time Tasso was writing the poem, there were several powerful women rulers who led troops into battle, including Mary, Queen of Scots, the Italianborn French queen Catherine De Medici, and England's Elizabeth I. So, in his characterization of Clorinda, Tasso might be arguing for a more inclusive role for a limited class of women.

However, his manipulation of Clorinda's character does not end with making her the commander of the Saracen army. Tasso also makes her the love interest of the Christian knight Tancred, whom she has never met. This is a traditional epic/romance convention. However, he twists this idea as well. Clorinda is never informed of Tancred's love until she is dying, slain by his sword in battle. The affair is completely one sided. Tasso is commenting on the inequities of European society and literary tradition that insist that a woman should accept whoever declares "love" for her, merely because the man has fallen in love. Tasso's Amazon, unlike those in Boiardo and Ariosto, does not

revert to a normal woman when love enters the picture. Neither does she kill herself for love, as Virgil's Amazon, Dido, does. While Clorinda is redeemed, in a religious sense, by Tancred, she does not submit to his wooing and remains true to her own code of conduct.

This divergence from the traditional form is also seen by the fact that Tasso also makes Clorinda a Christian by birth, but a Saracen by culture. The revelation that she was born a Christian does not change Clorinda's commitment to the Saracen cause. In fact, she seems to ignore the possible conflict of interest and proceeds to wreak the most damage against the Christians by burning their siege engines. Tasso makes the argument that just being born into a certain race, culture, or religion does not solidify one's "membership" in that group. To soundly consider oneself within a group, one must embrace its traditions, practices, and beliefs. Because Clorinda never practiced a Christian tradition, she did not consider the Christians she battled as her people. Tasso's view on this issue takes on greater meaning in light of the religious and ethnic wars that were tearing Europe apart during the Renaissance.

Erminia, however, does not fit neatly into either major category. She is a Syrian princess who is in love with the man who destroys her family and home, Tancred. She loves him because he protected her when the Christians sacked Antioch. She, too, is on the wrong side, narratively speaking, in love with the enemy. But, Erminia is not really an Amazon, nor is she only a Prize object. Tasso creates a complex character who wants to help her people, yet feels torn between her duty and her desire. She loves Tancred, but he does not know that she exists. She tells Aladine the names of all the Christian knights as they assemble around Jerusalem and she watches the battle between Tancred and Argantes. Although she is a Saracen and a woman, she is horrified when Tancred is wounded in the combat and longs to go and comfort him. This is the typical emotional state of a Prize object. However, Erminia realizes that she cannot venture outside the city walls as a woman; she needs a disguise. Unlike a true Amazon, Erminia borrows Clorinda's armor instead of a man's armor, suggesting that she wants the strength of an Amazon, but lacks the inner fiber to pull off the role. She acts like a typical Prize object as she flees from the Christian soldiers, who think she is Clorinda, but this role becomes highly ironic when the reader realizes that her main pursuer is Tancred. Erminia wants Tancred to pursue her, but when this happens, she panics and rejects the prize object role. Erminia's fate is rather cloudy at the end of the poem. She is tending Tancred's wounds, but he is still grieving for the loss of Clorinda and Tasso leaves their story unfinished. By playing with this character, Tasso exposes the dangerous situations and problems faced by real women in his era.

By far the most interesting and creative female character in *Gerusalemme Liberata* is the Saracen enchantress, Armida. She is gorgeous, wicked, evil, and marries the hero in the end. Armida enters the story as Satan's ploy to destroy Godfrey's army, thus taking on the traditional role of woman as evil temptress in the religious literature of the period. Here too, though, Tasso does not let these traditional definitions of femininity go unaltered. Godfrey is portrayed as the best and most chivalric knight in all of Europe, and one of the main rules of knighthood was that knights were to give aid to whomever

asked them for it, especially women. However, Godfrey refuses to grant Armida's request, so Godfrey is as much to blame for what happens as is Armida herself.

Armida enjoys playing the role of Prize object. She uses her sexuality and her beauty to seduce over fifty knights from Godfrey's army including Rinaldo, Godfrey's best fighter. Armida seduces and takes Rinaldo to her enchanted castle out in the Atlantic Ocean. There she entertains him with sex, food, wine, and beautiful things. Under Tasso's pen, the Prize object becomes the sexual aggressor. When Rinaldo decides to return to Godfrey's camp, he and Armida reverse roles. He is now the Prize object and she the pursuer. Although Armida has destroyed her palace and gone after Rinaldo, she still sees herself as the ultimate prize. She offers herself in marriage to any man who will bring her the prize she wants: the severed head of Rinaldo.

Even after all of this, the sexual freedom, the difference in religion, the contract on his life, Rinaldo still loves Armida. This love is not one sided as is the case with Tancred, Clorinda, and Erminia. Armida and Rinaldo have spent a good deal of time together, getting to know one another. Yes, her beauty and his handsome features drew them together at first, but there was no talk of marriage four hours after meeting as there is in most fairy tales and epic romances. Rinaldo and Armida discover that they truly love each other after the battle for Jerusalem is over and the Christians have won. Ironically, the least honorable female character in the poem, Armida, "wins." She converts to Christianity and gets her man. Through her marriage, Armida becomes the "successful" woman in the poem, according to Renaissance standards, rather than the honorable Clorinda or the long-suffering Erminia. Tasso rewrites the social code of conduct for women with the creation of Armida. By making her the only successful woman in the poem, Tasso argues for female agency, the freedom of sensual choice, and the redeeming power of romantic love.

The wild women of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* challenge the traditional definitions of real Renaissance women and the literary women of epic and romance. Tasso is not satis.ed with creating flat, static characters that can be easily defined or manipulated. Instead he plays with the traditional forms of the Prize object and the Amazon to create women characters who leap off the page and into the imagination.

Source: Michael Rex, for *Epics for Students*, Gale, 2001.

Critical Essay #2

Patrick Cheney compares the similarities and differences between Spenser's Dance of the Graces *and Tasso's* Dance of the Sylvan Nymphs*.*

The two major annotated editions of *The Faerie Queene* both overlook Tasso's Dance of the Sylvan Nymphs in the *Gerusalemme Liberata* as a source for Spenser's Dance of the Graces. Yet the similarities between the two Dances are striking. The scenes for both Dances, Mount Acidale and the Enchanted Forest, are Venusian paradises. Both scenes depict music, dancing nymphs who are really conjured spirits, an artist figure animating the Dance, and dancers who vanish through a hero's action. More speci.cally, both feature Dances animated by a magician in which one hundred spirit-nymphs move around a figure of beauty in the center.

In Book VI, canto x, of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser's hero Calidore stumbles upon Mount Acidale, a paradise sacred to Venus. Mount Acidale features a "spacious plaine" atop a hill that is "bordered with a wood," through which flows a "gentle flud". Calidore, hearing "the merry sound / Of a shrill pipe", marches to the forested edge of the plain until he spies

An hundred naked maidens lilly white,
All raunged in a ring, and dauncing in delight.
All they without were raunged in a ring,
And daunced round; but in the midst of them
Three other Ladies did both daunce and sing,
The whilest the rest them round about did hemme,
And like a girlond did in compasse stemme:
And in the middest of those same three,
was placed
Another Damzell.

Spenser's Dance features a series of concentric circles: a hundred nymphs in an outer ring surround the Three Graces, who in turn surround the Fourth Grace at the very center. All are spirits animated by the magician-poet Colin Clout, who plays his pipe to create the "enchaunted show". Calidore, "Much wond[ring] □ at this straunge sight □ / resolving, what it was, to know", steps forward, causing all the dancers to vanish.

Thus far critics have found a variety of sources for the ingredients of Spenser's complex Dance. Among the most commonly cited sources for Spenser's information on the Three Graces themselves are Hesiod's *Theogony*, Seneca's *De Beneficiis*, Servius' *In Vergilli Carmina Comentarii*, Boccaccio's *De Genealogia Deorum*, and Natalis Comes' *Mythologia*. However, according to D. T. Starnes, "all that Spenser wrote about the three Graces" could have come from two handbooks of mythology, Thomas Cooper's *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae & Britannicae* and Charles Stephanus' *Dictionarium Historicum, Geographicum, Poeticum,* which conveniently synthesize Hesiod, Seneca,

Servius, and Boccaccio in a manner resembling Spenser. Among the most commonly cited sources for Spenser's information on the Fourth Grace is Homer's Pasithea in the *Iliad*, as well as the mythological handbooks of Comes, Cooper, Stephanus, and others. The only two sources cited for an artist or magician creating the magical vision are Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*, which features an old witch animating a dance of twenty-four maidens for a knight of King Arthur's court; and Book II of Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, which features three naked ladies dancing around a youth who is making music. Although these sources shed much light on Spenser's Dance, none of them provides a precedent for Spenser's use of a "hundred" dancers in his outer ring□a feature consistently overlooked in all of the commentary.

Such a precedent is found in Tasso's Dance of the Sylvan Nymphs. In Canto XVIII of the *Gerusalemme Liberata* Tasso's hero Rinaldo enters the Enchanted Forest to cut down the charmed myrtle tree, which is traditionally sacred to Venus. His doing so will enable the Christian army to use the wood for engines designed to free Jerusalem. Tasso depicts the Enchanted Forest as being "lietamente ombroso" ("sweet with pleasant shade"), featuring "un flume trapassante e cheto" ("a quiet, still, transparent flood"). As Rinaldo progresses through this beautiful paradise, he hears "un suono in tanto / che dolcissimamente si diffonde" ("a sound that strange, sweet, pleasing was"). Attracted to the music, he moves forward to "un mirto □ in gran piazza" ("a myrtle in an ample plain"), where he witnesses a "maggior novitate" ("a marvel great and strange"):

Quercia gli appar, che per sé stessa incisa
apre feconda il cavo ventre, e figlia:
e n'esce fuor vestita in strana guisa
ninfa d'etá cresciuta (oh meraviglia!);
e vede insieme poi *cento* altre piante
cento ninfe produr dal sen pregnante.
Quai le mostra la scena, o quai dipinte
tal volta rimiriam dèe boscareccie,
nude le braccia, e l'abito succinte,
con bei coturni e con disciolte treccie:
tali in sembianza si vedean le finte
figlie de le selvatiche corteccie;
se non che in vece d'arco e di faretra,
chi tien leúto, e chi vïola o cetra.
E cominciâr costor danze e carole;
e di sé stesse una corona ordiro,
e cinsero il guerrier, sí come sòle
esser punto rinchiuso entro il suo giro.
Cinser la pianta ancóra; e tai parole
nel dolce canto lor da lui s'udiro.
(emphasis added)
[An aged oak beside him cleft and rent,
And from his fertile hollow womb forth ran
(Clad in rare weeds and strange habiliment)
A nymph for age able to go to man;

An *hundred* plants beside, even in his sight,
Childed an *hundred* nymphs, so great, so dight;
Such as on stages play, such as we see
The Dryads painted, whom wild Satyrs love;
Whose arms half naked, locks untrussed be,
With buskins laced on their legs above,
And silken robes tuck'd short above their knee;
Such seem'd the Sylvan daughters of this grove,
Save that, instead of shafts and boughs of tree,
She bore a lute, a harp or cittern she;
And wantonly they cast them in a ring,
And sung and danc'd to move his weaker sense;
Rinaldo round about environing,
As centres are with their circumference:
The tree they compass'd eke, and 'gan to sing,
That woods and streams admir'd their excellence.

Afterwards, the guardian of the grove, the enchantress Armida, appears. She has magically animated the hundred nymphlike spirits, to tempt Rinaldo from cutting down the tree, in order to help the pagan army defeat the Christians. But Rinaldo, infused with the Holy Spirit after his prayer on Mount Olivet, and armed with the divine wisdom of both the wise old magician from Ascolona and Peter the Hermit, refuses to be moved by Armida's enchantments and cuts the tree down. "Qui l'incanto forní, sparîr le larve" ("Then fled the spirts all, the charms all ended").

The similarities between the two Dances are striking enough to suggest that Spenser may have had Tasso's Dance in mind when creating his own. One reason the new source is significant is that for the first time we have a Dance similar in details to Spenser's that presents a precedent for a hundred nymphs dancing within a magical vision. Another reason the source is significant is that the juxtaposition of the two Dances offers us another instance of how Spenser adapts literary materials to his romantic epic. For, although both Dances present artistically created visions of beauty designed to enchant the senses of man, the differences between them are equally important. Armida's dancers, for example, are wantonly clad ("nude le braccia, e l'abito succinte"), revealing them to be the embodiments of seduction and the false appearance of reality, as the simile from the theatre in Stanza 27 further suggests. Hence, Armida uses this Dance as a vision of beauty designed to deceive Rinaldo□to tempt him to abandon his divinely ordained quest. Rinaldo's ability to disperse the magical illusion thus reveals the power of divine wisdom concerning the spirit of God to dispel the illusion of the false beauty of nature and man (woman).

Spenser, by contrast, inserts the Graces into the Dance (as it were), and converts the half-dressed nymphs into "naked maidens lilly white," so that "without guile / Or false dissemblaunce all them plaine may see, / Simple and true from covert malice free". The outer appearance and the inner reality of Spenser's dancers are the same: chaste, graceful beauty. For, unlike Armida, Colin Clout is a good magician who creates beautiful visions that inspire heroes on their quests. For Spenser, the Dance becomes

an embodiment of the true spiritual beauty that, however evanescent, nonetheless is the source guiding man to the fulfillment of his true destiny. Spenser's borrowing from Tasso thus reveals his syncretic habit of mind at work: he creates Colin's Dance of Grace out of Armida's Dance of Disgrace.

Source: Patrick Cheney, "Spenser's Dance of the Graces and Tasso's Dance of the Sylvan Nymphs," in *English Language Notes,* Vol. 22, No. 1, September, 1984, pp. 5-9.

Critical Essay #3

Charles Carman argues that Lodovico Cardi's painting "The Liberation of Jerusalem" is an interpretation of Tasso's Gerusalemme Liberata*.*

The National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin has a painting of *The Liberation of Jerusalem* in its collection. One enters the carefully arranged and brilliantly colored composition through the most prominent figure on a rearing horse who signals the onslaught enacted to the right. In sharp contrast is the relaxed and somewhat melancholy allegory of victory reclining in the foreground. By combining a keen historical accuracy with an allegorical figure to suggest the context and purpose of action, the painter reveals himself to be acutely sensitive to Torquato Tasso's epic poem *Gerusalemme liberata*. Before pursuing this relationship, however, there is a question of authorship to resolve.

Currently attributed to Ambrose Dubois, the painting actually belongs to the *oeuvre* of Lodovico Cardi, 'Il Cigoli.' Through comparisons with known works by Cigoli this painting can be attributed securely and dated with relative precision ca. 1590. The soldier at the lower right with his back to us grasping the bottom rung of the ladder, for example, is almost identical in pose to the tormentor in Cigoli's *Martyrdom of St. Lawrence* of 1590. Both he and his companion shooting an arrow are similar in pose, body type, proportion, and clothing to the soldier in Cigoli's *Resurrection* of 1591. And the ramparts of this Jerusalem are sufficiently close to the walls of Jerusalem in Cigoli's *St. Heraclius Carrying the Cross* of 1594 to confirm common authorship.

Stylistically the static posed quality in some of the principal figures immediately calls to mind Cigoli's teacher Santa di Tito. In fact Cigoli's *Liberation* is based partially on a version by Santi of 1589 that was executed as part of the decorations for the marriage of Ferdinand de' Medici and Christine of Lorraine, known to us from an engraving. Cigoli's portrayal of the city and his concentration of elements is quite different, yet there are two obvious points of comparison: one, the placing of a similar grouping of soldiers raising a ladder at the foreground right; and two, the practically complete adoption (by Cigoli) of Santi's foreground left soldier, shooting his crossbow (which Cigoli uses), for the soldier shooting an arrow at the right.

Cigoli, too, participated in the commission of 1589 where he painted a scene of *The Defeat of Manfred by Charles of Anjou*. Almost every painter of note in Florence participated in this commission and their works were placed on one of three triumphal arches (Cigoli's on the first and Santi's on the third). These celebrated the entry of Christine of Lorraine into Florence by depicting famous deeds of the Florentines (first arch), her wedding (second arch), and the glory of the houses of Lorraine and Guise (third arch). Cigoli's *Liberation*, though different in subject and composition, also owes something to his *Defeat of Manfred*. He has selected from the group fighting at the foreground right in the *Defeat* the horse and rider in the foreground left of the *Liberation*: an image lively enough to fit the subject but sufficiently subdued to serve a role more appropriate to the content of Tasso's poem.

The prominence of the mounted soldier suggests that he is Godfrey of Boulogne, leader of the Christian army. Beginning in stanza 49 of canto 18 of the *Jerusalem Liberated* the flight of a dove is described as it wings over the camp towards the walls only to be intercepted (stanza 50) by a falcon causing it to fall and land in Godfrey's lap. In stanzas 51 and 52, we learn that the dove bore a message for the Saracen prince, telling of Egyptian troops coming to relieve the siege and defeat the Christians. Taking this good fortune as a sign from heaven, Godfrey commences the attack. Though the dove is actually let go (stanza 53), we assume it is retained on top of Godfrey's staff to identify him and signify divine authority of the mission.

The figure's posture on horseback and his backward glance also help to identify him as Godfrey. In stanza 65, after describing the preparation for the battle and the Saracens' fear of the siege towers (seen in the distant middle ground), Tasso tells us:

The Syrian people now were no wit slow
Their best defences to that side to bear
Where Godfrey did his greatest engine show,
From thence where late in vain they placed were;
But he who at his back right well did know
The host of Egypt to be 'proaching near,
To him call'd Guelpho and the Roberts twain,
And said□On horseback look you still remain.□

Tasso continues in the next stanza:

And have regard, while all our people strive
To scale this wall where weak it seems and thin,
Lest unawares some sudden host arrive,
And at our backs unlook'd-for war begin.
This said, three fierce assaults at once they give,
The hardy soldiers all would die or win;
And on three parts resistance makes the King,
And rage ' gainst strength, despair ' gainst hope
doth bring□.

These stanzas point out that Godfrey is still on horseback, that in looking back he appears to anticipate the approaching Egyptians and that he is commanding the general mobilization of troops and siege towers for scaling the walls.

The success of this battle depends on the return to camp of Rinaldo who, released from the magical grip of Armida, leads the attacking forces. His bravery in leading the assault against the Saracens is succinctly described in stanza 77 where we read:

One died, another fell, he forward went,
And these he comforts and he threat'neth those,
Now with his hand outstretch'd the battlement

Well nigh he reach'd, when all his armed foes
Ran thither, and their force and fury bent
To throw him headlong down, yet up he goes;
A wond'rous thing, one knight whole armed bands,
Alone, and hanging in the air, withstands!

Cigoli captures Tasso's image of Rinaldo emerging from the chaos of the assault miraculously unscathed and poised to conquer. All but obscured at first glance, we find Rinaldo immersed in the battle, standing atop the ladder in the middle ground about to thrust his spear as if in response to Godfrey's commanding gesture.

Conforming with the poem's epic nature, Cigoli suggests events that lead up to and, by implication, extend beyond their current activity. Godfrey looks back anticipating the arrival of the Egyptians, and at the same time he gestures forward towards the walls and Rinaldo, who is on the threshold of victory. We are suspended in a moment of battle that carries with it the sensuous weight of the entire poem, the strain, terror, romance, and heroism of the whole Christian endeavor.

Also like Tasso, in his allegory accompanying the poem Cigoli describes the figures' hierarchical relationships to one another. Godfrey is understood most fully through his effectiveness as a leader□a purer, wiser man of control who ties the past to the present through his knowledge and action. Likewise, Rinaldo's depiction invokes his total life in the poem, culminating in his immersion in battle in obedience to his destiny and Godfrey's command. For Tasso, Godfrey as commander represents rational control. Rinaldo represents a more irrational nature that is subjected to obedience. If Godfrey is mind, a higher state, Rinaldo is the embodiment of passion that acts on what the mind, the intellect, commands. While Rinaldo had exhibited passion in a less acceptable, sensual fashion by yielding to Armida as well as by relinquishing his responsibility to nobility (of purpose), he is now in battle reunited with his proper natural role, obedience to intellect.

Tasso is heroic and he is melancholic. This Cigoli captures in the allegorical figure whose expression betrays the fear and sadness of these men who know devastation as well as glory. Her sadness is the embodiment of reflection and so Tasso ends his canto in stanza 105 following the battle:

The conquerors at once now enter'd all,
The walls were won, the gates were open'd wide;
Now bruised, broken down destroyed fall
The ports and towers that battery durst abide:
Rageth the sword, death murd'reth great and small,
And proud 'twixt woe and horror sad doth ride;
Here runs the blood, in ponds there
stands the gore,
And drowns the knights in whom it liv'd before.

But remorse cannot be the final tone of the poem. However much one senses the irony of bloody conquest, the main theme is Christian victory wherein all apparent contradictions are resolved. The painting celebrates this victory under the aegis of faith and divine supervision in a manner consistent with the Counter Reformation emphasis on faith and action (works), a meaning revealed through the allegorical figure.

The combination of her various attributes, cornucopia, conch shell, and triangle does not yield to precise interpretation, yet the figure can be interpreted to suggest a thoroughly Counter Reformatory meaning. To begin with, there is a prototype for the reclining figure. She resembles Eve in her posture and expression, as seen, for example, on Ghiberti's 'Gates of Paradise' and in numerous paintings of the fourteenth century. The figure of Eve in turn is related to the Earth Mother. Eve as Earth Mother is especially fitting here because she is associated with the Church. Like the Church, Eve is the mother of all living things. She is biblically responsible for future generations of mankind and her name in Hebrew is interpreted as meaning 'all living things.' It would follow then that Eve as the Church would also symbolize Jerusalem, even Jerusalem as the new Church. Clearly this is the subject of the painting in general, the saving of Jerusalem, or the purification and restitution of the Church in a Counter Reformatory sense. Eve then, may be interpreted as an allegory of the liberation of Jerusalem, the subject of the painting.

The attributes can be interpreted to support this thesis. If the shell and the cornucopia with grain are seen as basic elements, earth and water, they reenforce the notion of the figure as Eve/Earth Mother. Furthermore in the context of the painting's subject matter they can be interpreted as symbols of the sacraments of Eucharist (bread) and Baptism (water), the latter held on the side of the embattled citizens of Jerusalem soon to be availed of the opportunity of conversion. The triangle likewise suggests something compatible with this interpretation. The obvious meaning would be the Trinity. But an explanation of the tilted, almost inverted angle is less apparent. Possibly it is meant to conform with the compositional directives, the angle of the action, the charge forward and the scaling of the walls. If so, as a central symbol of the mystery of faith, the Trinity here would draw even greater attention to the Counter Reformation doctrine of the relationship of man's action and its success through faith. Placed in the center of the allegory of victory it reminds us of man's real means of achievement through the action and dedication to God of Godfrey and Rinaldo.

Cigoli, like Tasso, conceives the subject within the historical terms of the Counter Reformation. He casts the heroism, which subsumes the adventure and romance of the episodes of individuals, in the context of the larger struggle of the Church to assert its doctrine, to fight the heresy of Luther and the threat of the pagan Turks. Any painter undertaking a depiction of the liberation of Jerusalem subsequent to the publishing of Tasso's poem would presumably have this concept in mind. Let us consider two comparable examples dating around the same time or slightly earlier. One by Santi di Tito has already been mentioned; the other is by Bernardo Castello, who illustrated early editions of Tasso's poem. Santi's work contains many elements in common with Cigoli's, as we have seen. It lacks conviction, however. One is given only a fleeting

impression of battle. His organization of the composition into parallel receding planes is disjunctive. It does not unite the main elements of the composition, which represent opposing forces, in a way that suggests anything more than the description of parts of a battle. The viewer is effectively shut off from the painting, kept out of it. Yet one is treated to a feast of detail that stretches back into the distance exploring minute hill towns or castles that disappear into a vast sky.

Castello, too, arranges his composition into a series of planes that conform essentially to the picture plane. They recede into the distance parallel to one another, the first comprising the mass of attacking soldiers and the second the massive architecture of the city. There is no engaging activity, only the proportionally small foreground soldiers on horseback and the few distant figures running onto the ramparts. At no point does the viewer enter the space of the painting to foster sufficiently a feeling of involvement. In Cigoli's attack one moves into the space diagonally along the ramparts and battlefield. The action is close and consequently personal. One is caught between the soldiers scaling the walls and the charging horse. Cigoli provides an intimate view of the battle, not the entire scene as if viewed from a safe distance.

Ellis Waterhouse in his article 'Tasso and the Visual Arts' defines the prevalent unimaginative approach to Tasso. While referring to the tradition for illustrating *Orlando Furioso* , he says:

 it is therefore all the more curious that painters seem hardly to have illustrated Tasso at all during his lifetime apart from the two series of engravings for the illustrated editions of the *Gerusalemme*, which mainly show the 'historical' incidents of the poem and are not in the least influenced by Tasso's description of the passions.

Elsewhere in his article, Waterhouse partially locates the special quality that links Cigoli more closely to Tasso:

The mannerists constantly placed their figures in poses contrary to normal usage, but they were organized so predominantly in the interest of the whole pattern that their individual contribution to the narrative tended to be vague and imprecise. This was exactly the opposite of Tasso. In painting it was not until the 1590's, above all in the style of the Carracci, who were working on the decoration of the Galleria Farnese in Rome at the time of Tasso's death, that a reaction against this kind of mannerism set in, in favor of significant action.

It is precisely Cigoli's grasp of the personal as well as the essentially historical nature of

the characters that reveals his faithfulness to Tasso's interpretation of the epic. It is the passion of Tasso's figures that he strives so successfully to re-create. And certainly the transformation into 'significant action' of vague, imprecise, and anecdotal contributions to narrative content characterizes Cigoli and distinguishes him from his contemporaries, before, I might add, the Carracci were working in Rome.

As a model for achieving his coherency with Tasso it would seem that Cigoli adheres to the humanist theory of *ut pictura poesis*, 'as in painting so in poetry' (and vice versa). Central to this theory (adopted from antique sources and developed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries) is the notion that painting, like poetry, should be subject to the principles of clear style, convincing expression, and edifying purpose. In spite of the prevalence of this theory at the end of the century, few artists utilized its potential, as we have seen in the previous comparisons. Rensselaer Lee, in discussing the principles, evolution, and applicability of *ut pictura poesis* in the sixteenth century, points out that artists dealing with Tasso's *Gerusalemme* 'eschewed the serious main action of the poem that had to do with the siege and capture of Jerusalem under the crusader Godfrey Boulogne, and chose for the most part only those amorous and idyllic episodes wherein the lyric element is strong, and Tasso's idosyncratic vein of tender melancholy finds unfettered expression." He is commenting on the popularity of Tasso's poem among artists of the seventeenth century and their lack of concern with the moralistic and didactic aspects of the theory that were stressed by the Counter Reformation. But we are safe in saying that such a concern existed in the late sixteenth century. The instructional emphasis in *ut pictura poesis* served during Cigoli's time as a theoretical standard by which art might be measured and might convey historical significance. Cigoli's painting which we have discussed here is eloquent testimony to this.

Source: Charles H. Carman, "An Early Interpretation of Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*," in *Renaissance Quarterly,* Vol. 31, No. 1, Spring, 1978, pp. 30-38.

Critical Essay #4

C.P. Brand presents an examination of Tasso's style and language in Gerusalemme Liberata.

Structurally the *Liberata* is a fusion of the heroic epic and the chivalrous romance, and represents a conscious attempt at the perfection of a literary form. Few poems have been less 'spontaneous' in the conventional sense: years of reading, thought, discussion, correspondence, even formal declaration of principles preceded and accompanied the composition of the poem. For Tasso the peaks of literary achievement had been reached by Homer and Virgil in the epic and his aim was to rival, where possible to excel them. It is typical of Tasso's approach to art, to style and language to build on the great achievements of the past, and he deduced his principles for epic poetry very largely from the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*, and from the classical literary theorists, particularly Aristotle and Demetrius.

His epic thus treats an heroic theme of large scale, the siege and capture of Jerusalem in 1099 by Godfrey of Boulogne and his allies; it deliberately plunges 'in medias res' with the approach to Jerusalem, ignoring the previous exploits of the crusaders; it has a single unified theme, to which the episodes are subordinated; it adopts a serious magniloquent tone throughout□so that De Sanctis complained that 'from first to last he blew the trumpet'; and its characters and action are very widely inspired by classical precedent, with 'maraviglie', 'agnizione', 'peripezie', etc. The councils of the supernatural forces controlling the action, the quarrel and withdrawal of the leading Christian knights on whose eventual recall the success of the campaign depends; the night expedition of two enemy warriors, the espionage mission of Vafrino, the troop reviews, the battles and duels□these and many other incidents are often closely reminiscent of passages from Homer and Virgil. At the same time the heroic ideal is adapted to the claims of the time: a period of history is chosen which allows the celebration of the Christian faith, which is no less prominent here than are the Greek gods in Homer; and the contemporary critics of 'empty fictions' are met with references to the chronicles and a substratum of historical fact. This is the structure of the heroic epic devised by Tasso.

However, Tasso had no wish to renounce the chivalrous romance completely. His plan as outlined above might seem a deliberate attack on the romances, with their light-hearted humorous approach, loose structure, popular language and indifference to historical and geographical reality; and indeed Tasso's approach is in a degree negative. He opposes forcefully the 'defects' of the romances, but he cannot deny their appeal, and indeed feels it himself. Ariosto's remarkable popularity beside Trissino's failure was not to be ignored. The heroic ideal is adulterated therefore with the charms of the romances□notably the loves and enchantments□ and Tasso admits his compromise from the beginning. He begs pardon of his Christian muse for his adorning the truth:

□ e tu perdona
s'intesso fregi al ver, s'adorno in parte
d'altri diletti, che de' tuoi, le carte.

Sai che là corre il mondo ove più versi
di sue dolcezze il lusinghier Parnaso,
e che 'l vero condito in molli versi,
i più schivi allettando ha persuaso.

So in the accepted romance tradition the pagan Armida wreaks havoc in the Christian ranks by her seductive charms, and two other pagan beauties, an Amazon (Clorinda) and a stay-at-home (Erminia), are at the centre of other digressive incidents. Nor are the wizards and witches of the romances absent, and the crusaders even suffer at one stage from being turned into fish. The camouflage of these obvious 'diletti' is thin□the loves are mildly allegorical, an obstacle in the path of Christian duty; and the enchantments are remotely controlled by Christian powers, by God and his angels or Beelzebub. But the connection with the romances of chivalry is seen everywhere□not only in the form, where the traditional octave rhyme and canto structure are employed, but in the chivalrous spirit of the crusaders, who will take no unfair advantage of an unhorsed or disarmed opponent, and in many details of the action: even the favourite Italian knight Rinaldo reappears as a crusading ancestor of Tasso's patrons, the Estensi.

This compromise between the heroic, serious, didactic elements on the one hand and the fanciful and romantic on the other is typical of Tasso's approach to so many things: it constantly appears in his letters in his attempts to placate his critics and at the same time to safeguard his own wishes; in his search for peace and independence and yet his hankering for the court and its excitement; in his writings it is also evident in his aim to reconcile Aristotle and Plato, in his frequent reference to or intimation of sources, and his attempts at almost every literary genre, epic, lyric, dramatic, dialogue, discourse□as though he stands in no one camp but in all. So that he has seemed to many critics a man of the Renaissance struggling to conform to the spirit of the Counter-Reformation in which he had the misfortune to be born, while to others he is of the very essence of his time or even a herald of the Seicento. It is this very imprecision of mind, this drifting between schools and genres and feelings which contributes so effectively to Tasso's originality as a poet and which has preserved his reputation through the changing trends of the centuries, so that he has appealed to Secentisti and Arcadians, Romantics and Classicists.

This is, however, a difficult and dangerous course for a poet who may juxtapose but fail to blend the contrasting components. Thus the *Liberata* has been condemned by many critics since De Sanctis for failing to reconcile the heroic and the romance elements. The strictly heroic elements have been considered uninspired, accepted by a reluctant poet because of the climate of religious and literary opinion. Tasso is held to have been unmoved by the Crusade as a glorious feat of arms, or at least unable to convey his emotion; and to be lacking in religious faith, for which he substituted the formal ceremony and pomp of the Counter- Reformation; thus the attempt to create a heroic religious epic failed. On the other hand, where the poet was in sympathy with his material was in the love episodes and the enchantments□here, it was said, his fancy had free play and here the poet found inspiration for his best work, in the enchanted

wood and the garden of Armida, the death of Clorinda and the loves of Erminia and of Olindo. So the *Liberata* has been thought of as an epic poem in which the strict epic elements fail, while the romance, lyrical moments keep the poem alive—hence Momigliano's view, repeated by Fubini, of a new poetic technique, 'per cui la poesia si raccoglie in alcuni momenti culminanti e sembra tacere per lungo spazio'.

While there is certainly an element of truth in this view, it errs through oversimplification and the aesthetic judgement has been biased by long-standing historical fallacies—that the heroic and religious elements were alien to the poet who accepted unwillingly the dictates of Inquisitors and literary dictators—and perhaps by a distaste for psychological half-tones. (Is Tancredi a hero or isn't he? Is Armida a wicked sorceress? Is Goffredo the ideal prince?) The search for a biographical explanation has contributed to the distinction between epic and lyric, between heroic and romance, as though the poem were a document of the everyday life of the poet (who was neither heroic nor religious but who *was* superstitious and amorous) whereas it is really a reflection of a complex world of fears and aspirations which pervades the heroic and religious material no less than the romantic. However, the distinction between the two bodies of material, the heroic epic and the romance, is a useful one and will serve to illustrate what has been said.

Tasso's theme then is the celebration of a great and glorious feat of arms, and to dismiss the military and heroic elements as unpoetic concessions to literary tradition or popular taste or Counter-Reformation missionary zeal is to misread the poem. The military action is important to Tasso—it is not merely a structure on which to hang his romantic episodes. The poet is fascinated by action, perhaps precisely because he was not himself a man of action. His military experience is nil, but his imagination is stirred by the clash of arms and the emotional tensions aroused by the prospect of death. The very techniques of fighting interest him intensely, particularly the parry and thrust of the duel; he is expert in the arts of the sword, and the accuracy of his accounts of single combats is legendary. The duel is no longer the monotonous hacking of the chivalrous romances but a contest of skills and characters, a moving interplay of minds as of bodies. The duel between Tancredi and Argante in Canto VI is a good example of this, from the cautious taking of stance to the first feint inducing the aggressive Argante to make his overbold thrust; Tancredi parries swiftly, wounds his opponent and reassumes his stance. Argante, arrogant, always victorious, can scarcely believe that he is wounded and in his rage and pain rushes wildly on to Tancredi's sword again:

Il fero Argante, che se stesso mira
del proprio sangue suo macchiato e molle,
con insolito orror freme e sospira,
di cruccio e di dolor turbato e folle;
e portato da l'impeto e da l'ira,
con la voce la spada insieme estolle,
e torna per ferire, ed è di punta
piagato ov'è la spalla al braccio giunta.

Now the pagan throws discretion to the winds and rains blows on the lighter Tancredi who anxiously defends himself; and only the oncoming darkness puts an end to the dramatic conflict. The duel between Rinaldo and Gernando in Canto V is also dramatic, not only in the vivid representation of the action, but particularly in the picture of the inferior Gernando who in his moment of fear trembles, but puts on a bold face and meets his opponent resolutely. Thus the clash of arms uncovers the deepest resources of character.

The broader canvas of the military campaign is also treated with considerable narrative skill. Tasso is interested in every aspect of the conflict□the costumes, weapons, supplies, troop dispositions and tactics. The instruments of war assume a personality of their own, the sword for example which is thrust into the supplicating face of the young Lesbino:

Senso aver parve e fu de l'uom più umano
ilferro, che si volse e piatto scese.

The massive siege-tower participates in the action almost as though a character ('primo terror de le nemiche genti') and sets off a chain of colourful and moving incidents: it is damaged in the first assault, and brought back by the Christian knights, but its wheels break and it sways furiously in the darkness while Goffredo puts guards round it and sets men to work to repair it. Through the night the besieged Muslims can hear the sound of the workmen and see the gleam of their torches□hence the sortie of Clorinda and Argante to fire it and the lengthy attempt on the enchanted forest for more wood. The firing of the tower becomes a colourful and thrilling incident as the pagans flee leaving the blazing structure behind them:

Vedi globi di flamme oscure e miste
fra le rote del fumo in ciel girarsi.
Il vento soffia, e vigor fa ch'acquiste
l'incendio e in un raccolga i fochi sparsi.
Fère il gran lume con terror le viste
de' Franchi, e tutti son presti ad armarsi.
La mole immensa, e sì temuta in guerra,
cade, e breve ora opre sì lunghe atterra.

The tension of this night sortie is conveyed by Tasso with great skill: the two fleeing assailants reach the walls of the city with the Christians in pursuit; the gates are opened to receive them, and then hastily shut, and in the confusion Clorinda is shut out□but in the darkness she is able to mingle with her opponents and slip away. The splendour of troops in battle-array, the noise and confusion of the battle-field, the murmurings of a riotous army, the eloquence of leaders, the crafty subtleties of ambassadors □all these are brilliantly shown, not indeed with the accuracy of the historian, but with the feeling of a poet who imagines and relives the event with the help of the chroniclers and the poets of the past.

Thus in spite of his historical documentation Tasso's battles are often dream landscapes through which his knights pass in a frenzy of heroism. Ariosto, who knew something of campaigning from first-hand experience, has a scene in which his knights tramp reluctantly out into the rain to do battle with a tired wayfarer. Tasso will not suffer this denigration of the heroic ideal: he believes in the high motives of his crusaders. His account of the noble Goffredo pressing forward through the battle to attack Soliman is effective poetically precisely because it is a dream of heroism, a baroque painting where the outlines are forgotten: Goffredo seems to fly on, as he leaps over 'i confusi monti □ de la profonda strage': all is vague and confused□blood and dust, danger and death.

Arms and heroism are not then alien to Tasso's poetic inspiration, but it is more often the heroism of failure which moves him than the glory of success, and more often the horror of violence than the splendour of armed might. Tasso is fascinated by violence and has scenes of slaughter which shock by a grim realism of imagery and sound:

e'l ferro ne le viscere gli immerse.
Il misero Latin singhiozza e spira,
e con vomito alterno or gli trabocca
il sangue per la piaga, or per la bocca.

Elsewhere the horror of death is conveyed in a vague generic impression, as in his description of the uneasy still of the strewn battle-field:

Non v'è silenzio e non v'è grido espresso,
ma odi un non so che roco e indistinto:
fremiti di furor, mormori d'ira,
gemiti di chi langue e di chi spira.

It is easy to place these scenes of horror against the background of Tasso's own anxious and fearful mind□his practical inexperience of battle does not debar him from the poetry of violence and of death. Indeed Tasso's own passivity seems to bring into his heroic action an element of humanity which is rare in the chivalrous epic. There is often an inner life behind the act of heroism which the unhappy, unheroic Tasso knew only too well: Sofronia, the shy 'matura vergine' suffers martyrdom in her exposure to the public gaze before ever the fire is lit around her; the timid Erminia's heroism is to don Clorinda's armour and to dare to ride out, past the guards, in spite of her fears, into the hostile night; Gernando foresees his death at Rinaldo's hands and trembles inwardly with fear while he assumes a bold face.

The most moving poetry of defeat however is in the deaths of the two pagan leaders, Solimano and Argante. They are both fanatical warriors, relentless in battle, unwilling to acknowledge superior force; but the ferocity of each is softened by a moment of self-pity or of introspective gloom which heightens the heroism of their death. Argante pauses before his final fatal duel with Tancredi to look back at the falling Jerusalem: Tancredi

taunts him with cowardice and Argante suddenly rises superior to Tancredi's taunts in a few deeply pondered words:

Penso□risponde□a la città del regno
di Giudea antichissima regina,
che vinta or cade, e indarno esser sostegno
io procurai de la fatal ruina,
e ch'è poca vendetta al mio disdegno
il capo tuo che 'l Cielo or mi destina.

It is with Argante, the noble loser, that our sympathies lie, and his ultimate death, brought about by the violence of his own blow, is that of a 'grande vinto', and has become legendary:

Moriva Argante, e tal moria qual visse:
minacciava morendo e non languia.
Superbi, formidabili e feroci
gli ultimi moti fur, l'ultime voci.

Solimano too reveals a moment of weakness in his tears for the dead Lesbino. When he falls finally stunned by Rinaldo's blow he is suddenly aware of his approaching defeat and death, and cannot bring himself to defend his life, but dies silently under the attack:

non fugge i colpi e gemito non spande,
nè atto fa se non se altero e grande.

It is by virtue of this intensely personal reaction to the theme of arms and heroism that Tasso's choice of subject is justified poetically. Yet the element of subjectivity is constantly minimized by Tasso in his 'lettere poetiche', while the historical accuracy is emphasized. The choice of an historical theme is made in accordance with the poet's belief in the importance of verisimilitude. He states in the *Discorsi dell' Arte Poetica* that the theme of the epic poem is best taken from history, because if the reader thinks that the material is false, he will not be so easily moved to anger, terror or pity. Historical truth is thus a means of gaining the close participation of the reader.

A good deal of historical research therefore went into the *Liberata*. Tasso made use of William of Tyre, Paolo Emilio, Roberto Monaco, indeed any historical information that came his way, without distinguishing the more reliable sources from the derivative. The crusade of 1096-99 organized by Urban II, is then an historical fact, and from the chronicles Tasso draws many of his characters: Goffredo and his brothers Eustazio and Baldovino, Tancredi, Pietro the hermit, Dudone, Odoardo, Ottone Visconti, Guglielmo Embriaco and others; and many details and episodes are also taken from historical sources: the expulsion of the Christians from Jerusalem, the geographical descriptions of the city, the underground tunnel, the death of Sveno, the Arab attack, the drought,

and many details of the battles □the dove-messenger intercepted by the Christians, the use of siege-towers, of deception, smoke, even the weather of the day of the final battle. More often hints in the chronicles are the basis for Tasso's own inventions. Clorinda, an invented character, is justified by a statement in an anonymous chronicle that the Saracen women fought against the Crusaders. Ottone's duel with the invented Argante is based on a duel between Ottone and a pagan mentioned by William of Tyre. The Sofronia-Olindo episode is invented on the basis of a report of the self-sacrifice of a Christian youth following the discovery of a dead dog in a Jerusalem mosque and threats of punishment of the Christians for profanation. Tancredi's love for Armida is justified by Tasso in a letter where he claims that the chronicles describe him as 'excessively fond of the embraces of the Saracen women'. Similarly Tasso is able to defend the supernatural elements by reference to the beliefs of the time, 'the history of this war being full of miracles, it wasn't suitable for the poem to be any less wonderful'.

In many cases however the chronicles were a hindrance to the poet. They often did not conform to the heroic ideal which he was celebrating because they showed up the vices of the crusaders: he has tried, he says, to gloss over or excuse the defects of the Christians. He pretends therefore that the faults of Raimondo were due to his old age, and those of Tancredi to his youth, although he knows that this is not historically true. For structural reasons he felt the need to bring the anti-Christian forces under a more unified command, and he makes Solimano subordinate to the King of Egypt and the Arabs, while Argante is made the rival of Solimano, in imitation of Homer and Virgil□but he has doubts about this: some critics, he says, might like him to keep to historical truth, but he would prefer not to do so.

Tasso is therefore no enthusiast for historical truth and frequently ignores it or consciously exaggerates it. So the three years of campaigning are increased to six; Ugone who has deserted is declared to have died; Goffredo, not in fact elected to leadership until after the conquest of Jerusalem, is here made the ideal prince from Canto I; and the invasion by the Egyptian army is made to occur several months earlier than it really did in order to produce a grand climax to the poem. Thus Tasso's frequent references in letters and discourses to his historical sources are often a cover for his own artistic inclinations□an excuse for the inventions of his own imagination which he feared that moralizing and pedantic critics might censure.

Tasso's theories did not require the epic to reproduce historical truth, but to celebrate 'l'impresse d'una eccelsa virtù bellica, i fatti di cortesia, di generosità, di pietà, di religione'. It is from his belief in the illustrious nature of the epic and in universal truth that so many of the defects of the poem spring. In accordance with these principles Tasso strives, often uncritically, after certain ideals of character and action. He wishes to impress on us the noble, grave, serious nature of his heroes and he is not content to let this arise from their actions, but blows the trumpet when they appear. Goffredo more than any other character suffers from this. He is not in fact a very compelling or admirable leader, and resorts to the drawing of lots and a hypocritically contrived dignity to cover his insecure control of his army□but Tasso bolsters him up with pompous epithets: in the first canto alone he is 'il gran capitano', 'il pio Goffredo augusto in volto ed in sermon sonoro', 'il provido Buglion' with 'volto placido e composto'. This arid and

meaningless labelling is applied to nearly all his main characters: Rinaldo 'venerabile e severo', Clorinda's 'regal sembianza', Armida's 'regal sdegno', Erminia 'altera e gentile', Dudone 'di virilità grave e maturo'; and of the Caliph of Egypt, who, history tells us, was a youthful twenty-five, Tasso declares:

e ben da ciascun atto è sostenuta
la maestà de gli anni e de l'impero.

The attempt to sustain a lofty tone is thus intruded into the action where often it serves only to accentuate an uninspired passage. The lance, which Goffredo avoided by ducking, strikes the faithful Sigiero, whose fidelity must be stressed:

nè gli rincresce, del suo caro duce
morendo in vece, abbandonar la luce.

It is notable in the hyperbolic feats of arms where the exhausted muse resorts to ever hollower epithets:

egli fe' cose
incredibili, orrende e monstruose.

and it leads the poet into complicated and unnatural situations, as in the Sofronia episode. The historical origin was a dead dog thrown into a mosque but a dead dog was hardly worthy of the heroic epic. Tasso looks for a substitute and thinks of the Palladio stolen by Ulysses and Diomedes in the *Iliad.* By a violent contortion of probability he then makes the pagans steal the Christian image of the Virgin to protect them, so that a Christian could be expected to steal it back, and a truly noble act of heroism may replace a rather pedestrian one.

The search for heroic gravity here as elsewhere leads Tasso too often to the classics, as though the presence of a Homeric detail, by the force of association, will ensure dignity and gravity. Particularly in matters of style Tasso repeats constantly the formulas and devices of the 'stile magnifico' which Aristotle and Demetrius had declared appropriate to the epic, and the pursuit of this stylistic ideal leads him into many faults. It is above all his attempt to avoid the commonplace and everyday which is so difficult to reconcile with his professed attention to historical truth. Everyday words are replaced by high-sounding periphrases, such as that describing Erminia in the shepherd's cottage making cheese:

e da l'irsute mamme il latte preme
e 'n giro accolto poi lo stringe insieme.

In many cases a vacuous genetic language results, or a pedantic paraphrase of a commonplace expression:

e Gabriel s' accinse
veloce ad esseguir l'imposte cose.

A similar lameness results from a mechanical amplification, which aims at solemnity but sounds very like padding:

e drizza a l'Oliveto il lento moto
monte che da l'olive il nome prende,
monte per sacra fama al mondo noto.

It is often Tasso's fear that his material is not sufficiently heroic which prompts him to resort to rhetorical devices. Erminia's indecision between her desire to help the wounded Tancredi and her fears of leaving the besieged city is poetically inspiring, but Tasso must relate it to his heroic theme by a high-sounding personification:

e fan dubbia contesa entro al suo core
duo potenti nemici, Onore e Amore.

This pompous and literary style is particularly inappropriate in the mouths of some of his characters, who are compelled to use a language and literary reminiscences remote from their experience, so that we find the phraseology of classical philosophy on the lips of the pagans, and the crusading soldiers praying at the sight of Jerusalem in Dantesque tones.

In this examination of the attempt to create an heroic epic, one important element has not yet been mentioned: it is the concern with 'meraviglia', a word which constantly appears in statements about the epic, and which recurs not infrequently in the *Liberata* itself:

percote l'alta pianta. Oh meraviglia!
manda fuor sangue la recisa scorza.

Its close association with classical precedent ('mirabilia') is apparent from Tasso's declared aim of over-going antiquity:

Già ne l'aprir d'un, rustico sileno
meraviglie vedea l'antica etade,
ma quel gran mirto da l'aperto seno
imagini mostrò più belle e rade.

In the *Giudizio sulla Gerusalemme Conquistata* he claims that he is in some ways more 'meraviglioso' than Homer. Elsewhere he insisted that it was the poet's aim to arouse wonder□this was essential in the heroic epic□but at the same time he must be true to life. The fictions of the classical epics, based on a false religion and therefore incredible, should now be replaced by the supernatural structure of Christianity, God and his angels, Beelzebub and his devils. In this way not only the marvels of antiquity but also the enchantments of the romances could be reconciled with the Christian religion□or such was Tasso's intention.

The suitability of supernatural elements arousing wonder in a poem intended to celebrate heroic ideals is clear: heroes are superhuman by virtue of their alliance with supernatural forces, and only by superhuman strength can the opponents of heroes rise to meet them. This is true of the classical epics no less than of the romances—indeed the continued popularity of magic throughout the ages might well have made it indispensable now. But it is no cold spirit of literary emulation that interests Tasso in the 'marvellous'. He was himself fascinated by the supernatural throughout most of his life, in fact until the comparative calm of his last years. Lacking a firm religious faith, he was unable to reconcile the world as he knew it with his own inner consciousness. Science could not explain all the marvels of the world, and what escaped the control of reason and will seemed to him a sort of diabolical force. Hence his fascination with magic forces, which led him at one stage to believe that he was himself bewitched.

The 'meraviglie' of the *Liberata* therefore respond both to a theoretical literary programme and to an intimate personal necessity. Their failure always to coincide seems to explain the uncertain inspiration of the supernatural elements in the poem. Thus the reproduction of classical miracles in a Christian setting is often incongruous: the Christian guardian angel of Goffredo heals his wounds by plucking herbs on Mount Ida and dropping them unobserved in the dressing that is prepared for him. Beelzebub's method of disturbing the duel between Argante and Raimondo is to form an image of Clorinda ('Mirabil mostro') who urges Oradino to shoot an arrow at Raimondo, and the latter's guardian angel is only just in time to reduce the force of the shot—a complex and unconvincing intrigue inserted under Homeric influence. Equally uninspired is the episode in which, in imitation of the *Iliad*, *Odyssey* and *Aeneid,* Solimano enters Jerusalem in a magic chariot enveloped in a cloud that makes him invisible. He also uses an underground tunnel, mentioned in the chronicles—which seems hardly necessary for one so magically equipped.

Indeed the miracles of the Christian religion are reconciled only with difficulty with the needs of the story. The mysterious appearance of two hermits by Sveno's dead body and their command that for the sake of revenge his sword should be taken to Rinaldo, is a strangely un-Christian scene. So too is the picture of the hermit Pietro, whose devout trance ('Pieno di Dio, rapto dal zelo') enables him to recount the glories of the house of Este. The attempt to 'Christianize' the supernatural structure of the poem is generally a failure—the struggle between Christians and Moslems is related to a contest between God and the devil the outcome of which is only too obvious; and the miracles by which God answers the prayers of the faithful are too mechanically obvious and too zealously advertised:

Oh glorioso capitano! oh molto
dal gran Dio custodito, al gran Dio caro!
A te guerreggia il Cielo; ed ubidenti
vengon, chiamati a suon di trombe, i venti.

Elsewhere and most frequently the supernatural is a mechanical afterthought, superimposed on an action which is already psychologically justified: Gernando's

arrogant dislike of Rinaldo is adequately explained before ever the 'maligno spirito d'Averno' unnecessarily creeps into his breast. Tasso's approach is perhaps illustrated by his treatment of Tancredi's failure in the enchanted wood: before the tree which he must fell but which takes on the appearance of his lady Clorinda, he is caught in an agony of indecision likened in a telling simile to a nightmare; but Tasso regretted this human weakness in his hero and proposed to change the passage by introducing an enchantment. The change was not made, however, on this occasion and Tancredi's humanity does not suffer.

In spite of this Tasso succeeds in innumerable ways in convincing the reader that the hand of God does indeed hang over the action□a sense of fatality, which must be God's providence, drives the characters on their courses. This is particularly moving in the case of Clorinda. On the evening of her sortie to fire the siege-tower her nurse senses the perils that await her and tells her the story of her youth□her miraculous preservation from dangers, the warnings conveyed in a dream that she should be baptized. Now at least she should take heed. Clorinda listens attentively for she too has had forebodings, but she will not abandon the faith in which she has been brought up and she goes off, completes her task and is attacked by Tancredi. The end is preordained, and is forecast with melancholy resignation:

Ma ecco omai l'ora fatale è giunta
che 'l viver di Clorinda al suo fin deve,

and fatally wounded she accepts baptism and dies at peace.

□In questa forma
passa la bella donna e par che dorma.

There are moments too when the presence of God and his angels urging on the battling Christians seems to blend the earthly and the supernatural forces into an irrestible power□as in the assault on Jerusalem, where Goffredo lifts his eyes to heaven and sees the dead Christian heroes with the heavenly host fighting for the Christian cause.

Where, however, the supernatural most frequently inspires Tasso to passages of great poetic feeling is where it coincides with his own anxious sense of the mystery of the world, in the expression of vague haunting fears and strange visions of fascinating but unattainable scenes of beauty and peace. The nightmarish horrors of his own clouded mind reappear in the devilish forces which beset the Christians, in Pluto's terrifying appearance, and the swarming demons:

Venieno innumerabili, infiniti
spirti, parte che 'n aria alberga ed erra,
parte di quei che son dal fondo usciti
caliginoso e tetro de la terra;

and the murky landscapes:

Ma già distendon l'ombre orrido velo
che di rossi vapor si sparge e tigne.

The enchanted wood is a study in fear: Tancredi, like Tasso, does not dare to confess his fear—only the uncomplicated Rinaldo is unmoved by the terrors. These are imprecise pictures where the image has no place in space or time, no rational explanation; their fascination is in their lack of rationality. The mysterious haunting music of the wood springs from an unknown source:

di novo s'udia quella gioconda
strana armonia di canto e di querele;
ma il coro uman, ch'a i cigni, a l'aura, a l'onda
facea tenor, non sa dove si cele:
non sa veder chi formi umani accenti,
nè dove siano i musici stromenti.

Together with the fear of unknown dangers goes the dream of only half-visualized scenes of happiness and confidence. The Christian knights Carlo and Ubaldo are carried to the distant Fortunate Isles in a boat that sails but seems to fly, impelled by an unknown force, the description of which is vague, generic, significant for the sound rather than the visual imagery—'porta seco non so che di vago e di curioso', Tasso said of it. Here in a remote and misty dream are set the gardens of Armida, on a dark and uninhabited mountain amid snow and shadows. Dante's supernatural world is so precise that it can and has been mapped with geometrical accuracy. We could hardly even begin to map the gardens of Armida. Tasso, sensitive as he was to the poetry of Dante's vision, goes beyond him in the expression of these vague and dreamlike experiences that belong not in the concrete world of action and reality, but in the only half-conscious workings of his own mind. This is a new note in Italian literature and a foreshadowing in some ways of the poetry of the Romantics.

The fascination of magic is only one element in Tasso's preoccupation with the supernatural which arises, as we have suggested, out of an intimate sense of the mystery of the universe and of man's part in it, and a dissatisfaction with the rational explanations of science. This concern with a reality beyond the normal world of the senses is, in my view, of a religious nature and identifies Tasso as a man of serious religious aspirations. Many critics have been unable to find in the *Liberata* what they term the 'true religious sense', and have dismissed the religious passages as cold, formal, expressive of the letter of the Counter-Reformation, preoccupied with ceremony and display. Donadoni was extremely critical: Tasso's religious sense seemed to him negative and insincere, not really religious at all, but a weariness of the world, something external and formal.

It is undeniable that the spirit of the Council of Trent pervades the poem—this is in a sense a document of the Counter-Reformation in which the religious ideals of the new age are displayed in the medieval context of the crusades: the resistance of the Church

to the heretical empire of the overpowerful Turks as to the heresies of the Reformation was a contemporary necessity in which Tasso sincerely believed and which certainly motivated his choice of subject. It is part of Tasso's epic ideal that his poem should celebrate 'l'illustre della religione', and he brings to his work a seriousness of religious interest not to be found in Pulci or Ariosto. The poet's fears of Inquisitorial censorship certainly influenced his treatment of the subject, but there is every reason to believe that his conformity was not a violent suppression of his own inclinations; it has been aptly said that the Counter-Reformation was *in* him.

Whether or not one accepts this view it is clear that two different themes of a religious nature recur in the *Liberata*. On the one hand there is the personal, intimate sense of mystery, loneliness and weakness which seeks for God as an explanation and consolation; and on the other is the consciousness of the collective force of the Church and the delight in its ceremonial and liturgy. These are not conflicting themes, although Tasso often fails to reconcile them in his poetry just as he had not yet succeeded in reconciling them in his life. The first is nearly always poetical in expression. Rinaldo on Monte Oliveto is alone, beyond Church, priests, ritual□he looks up at the night and marvels at the incorruptible beauties of nature and is ashamed of his own wickedness. His penitence is the result of that sense of mystery and wonder which was Tasso's own experience and which he interpreted in a broadly Platonic rather than Christian way:

Fra se stesso pensava: 'Oh quante belle
luci il tempio celeste in se raguna!
Ha il suo gran carro il dì, l'aurate stelle
spiega la notte e l'argentata luna;
ma non è chi vagheggi o questa o quelle,
e miriam noi torbida luce e bruna
ch'un girar d'occhi, un balenar di riso,
scopre in breve confin di fragil viso.'

A sense of the weakness of man and the futility of human effort recurs in the journey of Carlo and Ubaldo to the Fortunate Isles:

Giace l'alta Cartago: a pena i segni
de l'alte sue ruine il lido serba.
Muoiono le città, muoiono i regni,
copre i fasti e le pompe arena ed erba,
e l'uom d'esser mortal par che si sdegni:
oh nostra mente cupida e superba!

So the 'mago di Ascalonia' condemns his own folly of thinking that his learning could ever measure the creations of God; and Ugone contrasts in his exhortation to Goffredo the beauty of the heavens with the loneliness of man on earth:

Quanto è vil la cagion ch'a la virtude
umana è colà giù premio e contrasto!
in che picciolo cerchio e fra che nude
solitudini è stretto il vostro fasto!

Here then the unhappiness of the human lot is religious in origin, a sense of the greatness of God's creation which man can never fully experience on this earth, an aspiration to a beauty and mystery beyond the senses. In contrast with the loneliness, the weakness and fears of the poet, which receives poetic form in the gloomy horrors of darkness, is the glowing light that dispels fear, as in Goffredo's vision of Ugone:

Pareagli esser traslato in un sereno
candido e d'auree flamme adorno e pieno;
e mentre ammira in quell'eccelso loco
l'ampiezza, i moti, i lumi e l'armonia,
ecco cinto di rai, cinto di foco,
un cavaliero incontra a lui venia.

Alongside this rather pondered philosophical faith should be set the simple acceptance of Christ which brings peace□the acceptance of Clorinda who has not questioned the Moslem faith in which she was brought up (and is free from the introspective anxiety of some of the Christians), but who asks for baptism and dies in peace without second thoughts. Her calm acceptance of death is the Christian ideal of peace in God; and her faith has the power to stir the errant Tancredi, who has set the love of a pagan woman above his duty as a Christian:

In queste voci languide risuona
un non so che di flebile e soave
ch'al cor gli scende ed ogni sdegno ammorza,
e gli occhi a lagrimar gli invoglia e sforza.

The simplicity of this scene where the spiritual awakening of Tancredi is an intimate and personal drama that takes place within himself and without the external pressure of the Church has been contrasted by an Italian critic with the coldly formal sermon preached at him by Pietro the Hermit shortly after:

Questa sciagura tua del Cielo è un messo.

It is as though Tancredi is not to be entrusted with the working out of his own spiritual welfare, which must be placed in the hands of the Church. Similarly Rinaldo's moving experience on Monte Oliveto is reinforced by another formal sermon from Pietro. This concession to the spirit of the times is probably not insincere. Tasso was not content with the reconciliation of Plato and Aristotle with which he interpreted the real world and his own reactions to it. He felt the need of a creed, and the formalities of worship□

hence his eagerness to consult the Inquisitors. He was seriously afraid of hell and only too eager to conform, so that the ceremonial of the poem, the confessing, baptizing, praying, preaching, parading correspond to an inner prompting in the poet. The love of colour and pageantry inspires some fine passages, particularly the procession to Monte Oliveto:

Va Piero solo innanzi e spiega al vento
il segno riverito in Paradiso,
e segue il corso a passo grave e lento
in duo lunghissimi ordini diviso.

At times, however, this religious mission is cold and unmoving. Tasso works too hard to raise the tone in obedience to the principles of magnificence and gravity which dictate his treatment of the military theme, and a formal pomp and display destroy the sense of religious devotion. God and his angels gaze down from a theatrically contrived stage setting, with Fate and Nature, Motion and Time, Place and Fortune carefully disposed around them. The religious struggle becomes a cold political battle in which the Christians' prayers are mechanically answered and those of their opponents ignored, while an unflinching love of blood and revenge moves the ministers of God and Tasso himself:

O giustizia del Ciel, quanto men presta
tanto più grave sovra il popol rio!
Dal tuo secreto proveder fu desta
l'ira ne' cor pietosi, e incrudelio.
Lavò co 'l sangue suo l'empio pagano
quel tempio che già fatto avea profano.

Appropriate as this may have been to the spirit of the Crusade, we feel neither interest nor sympathy for this political conflict reported in so partisan a manner.

Above all, the religious inspiration falls foul of a cold didactic sermonizing tendency which is the formal side of the Counter-Reformation. Sofronia reads the amorous Olindo a chilling lecture on his sins:

Amico, altri pensieri, altri lamenti,
per più alta cagione il tempo chiede.
Chè non pensi a tue colpe? e non rammenti
qual Dio prometta a i buoni ampia mercede?

□and most of Pietro's speeches are set in the same key. A severe Inquisitorial morality enters the medieval scene:

□in cima a l'erto e faticoso colle
de la virtù riposto è il nostro bene.

Chi non gela e non suda e non s'estolle
da le vie del piacer, là non perviene.

This didactic note in the *Liberata* sounds forced and superficial. It is not an integral part of the poem, and the attempt to strengthen it in the *Conquistata* proved quite unsuccessful. Indeed there is good external evidence of Tasso's purely formal attempts to add more weight to his poem in his Allegory, which was not composed until after the poem was written and first appeared only with the Bonnà editions. Tasso himself declared in a letter to Gonzaga that when he first began his poem the idea of an allegory was quite remote from his mind, but that when he had come more than halfway he began to think about an allegory, as something that might help him to meet his critics. The formal Allegory is thus an afterthought. This does not mean that symbolic meanings did not occur to Tasso as he wrote□ in view of the derivative nature of so much of the material this would hardly have been possible. The tests of the enchanted wood are clearly a means of purification, and the garden of Armida a picture of the seduction of the senses; but the essence of these episodes is in their literal, not their allegorical senses, which is stressed, as Tasso admits, because of 'la strettezza dei tempi'; and in fact the Allegory was welcomed widely as justification for the amorous material, and helped to smooth the poem's path, not least in England.

The elements examined so far may all be considered essential features of the serious heroic epic: that is to say from the adaptation of the classical epics to the spirit of the Counter-Reformation Tasso evolved a poem celebrating an heroic and religious ideal of character, based on an historical theme and interpreted according to classical principles of verisimilitude and 'meraviglia'. In adopting this programme Tasso was conforming, sometimes more, sometimes less willingly, to the ideas of his time□ to the literary Aristotelianism and Catholic severity of the late sixteenth century in Italy. His constant theorizing on the epic and his anxious self-abasement before the Inquisition are characteristic of his age, even more than they are of the man, and while Tasso was able to mould the ideals of the time to his own temperament, so that in the heroic and Christian ideal and the techniques of verisimilitude and 'meraviglia' he translates aspects of his own inner life, the inspiration here is uncertain and unequal just because of the pressure of external forces.

An epic constructed exclusively according to this formula could not satisfy Tasso because it would not allow him sufficient place for himself. He makes this clear in the *Arte Poetica* in his insistence on the poet's 'licenza del fingere'. The theme chosen should be sufficiently remote in time to allow the poet to invent as he sees fit, and the material should not be too extensive if the author is not to be forced to leave out 'gli episodi e gli altri ornamenti, i quali sono al poeta necessarissimi'. The episodes, which deal mainly with love and enchantments, have long been admired as the most personal and inspired parts of the poem. At the same time they are the traditional components of the chivalrous romance and were still of great popular appeal, so that Tasso in introducing his serious epic suggests that the introduction of elements not strictly sanctioned by his Muse is a sop to popular demands.

The distinction between the essential, serious, epic elements in his poem and the non-essential, romance, 'soave licor', is then something of which Tasso is so conscious as to feel the need of an explanation and apology from the very beginning. However, this attempt to forestall moral and religious objections is far from convincing and the simile of the medicine administered to the sick child (a conventional literary one), like so many of Tasso's similes, sounds quite inappropriate in its context (although it certainly comes directly from the experience of the unhealthy Tasso who would take no medicine that wasn't sweet). In fact it is in the 'sweets' of his poem that he seems most inspired, the love stories, the enchantments and the pictures of nature which are as though interludes in the serious action of the epic. The enchantments which, as we have seen, corresponded to a demand of Tasso's own personality, could be related, although rather loosely, to classical principles of 'meraviglia'.

The love episodes on the other hand were remote from classical precedent. Dido and Circe provided no more than a hint. In the relationship of Sofronia and Olindo, Tancredi and Clorinda, Erminia and Tancredi, Rinaldo and Armida, Tasso was able to express many aspects of the psychology of sexual love which he knew from his own experience or observation; and here he felt freer to develop and embroider his subject as his imagination moved him, unencumbered by historical sources, and not seriously hindered by principles of epic gravity.

His conception of love, as of heroism and of religion, is strongly influenced by his own deeprooted anxiety and melancholy. It is not the happiness and tranquillity of reciprocal passion physically fulfilled or spiritually sublimated which stirs Tasso's imagination□any more than uninhibited courage or untroubled faith. It is love as an unknown, unreciprocated devotion or as frustrated physical desire□a mysterious fated power that cannot be resisted. The loves, all of which are finally legalized or 'spiritualized', are full of human weaknesses and suffering. Thus Olindo loves Sofronia from afar without daring to declare his 'cupidi desiri'. He is young and modest; she is 'matura', beautiful, chaste, retiring, taking no interest in her beauty and avoiding admirers. For centuries readers have interpreted this episode as a camouflage for the youthful Tasso's love for the mature Leonora d'Este, and while this has now been abandoned one cannot doubt that the incident springs from the poet's own experience. It is written from the viewpoint of Olindo; the reader, like the young lover, does not know what Sofronia feels:

□ed ella
o lo sprezza, o no 'l vede, o non s'avede.

But the unhappy Olindo is able to reveal his love by offering the supreme sacrifice of his own life to save Sofronia when she is bound to the stake□it is the adolescent dream□but he is bound to the same stake and in his despair dares to confess his love and his sensual desire:

oh fortunati miei dolci martiri!
s'impetrarò che, giunto seno a seno,
l'anima mia ne la tua bocca io spiri.

To complain that Olindo's declaration is too sudden, or his language too rash in view of the flames at his feet, is to miss the point of this adolescent vision. The sense of outrage to the immaculate, unapproachable Sofronia in her exposure to the public gaze and then to the physical contact and immodest language of Olindo is indicative of the conflicting emotions in the mind of the young lover who both loves and resents, reveres and desires. The last-minute release by Clorinda brings the dream to a happy ending rather abruptly and in a few hasty lines we learn that Sofronia's modesty is overcome by Olindo's loving sacrifice, and Olindo's desires are legitimized by marriage. The antithetical language is a conscious attempt to reflect the tense conflict of the action: contrast the highly artificial style of the frenzied Olindo at the stake:

Quest'è dunque quel laccio ond'io sperai
teco accoppiarmi in compagnia di vita?

with the simple words of the calm Sofronia:

Mira 'l ciel com'è bello, e mira il sole□

Erminia's love for Tancredi, like Olindo's for Sofronia, is undeclared and unreciprocated. She is a child indulging a dream. When Tancredi conquered her father's kingdom his courteous treatment of the captive princess conquered her too, and reluctantly she left her 'prigion diletta' to go with her mother to Jerusalem where she lives in her memories:

Ama ed arde la misera, e sì poco
in tale stato che sperar le avanza
che nudrisce nel sen l'occulto foco
di memoria via più che di speranza;
e quanto è chiuso in più secreto loco,
tanto ha l'incendio suo maggior possanza.

When Tancredi is wounded in his duel with Argante she longs to go out and help him, but her duty is to care for her opponent. The long debate with herself before she finally puts on Clorinda's armour and rides out is spoilt by Tasso's exaggerated concern with the verisimilitude of this incident, but it contains some moving poetry, notably the picture of the tender girl donning the hard armour, her gazing across the Christian camp in the starry night, and her flight from the hostile guards:

Fuggì tutta la notte, e tutto il giorno
errò senza consiglio e senza guida,
non udendo o vedendo altro d'intorno,
che le lagrime sue, che le sue strida.

She takes refuge with the shepherds and then disappears until the end of the poem where she and Vafrino find the senseless body of Tancredi and in her care of his wounds, bound with her own hair, she is able at last to show her love. It is another

dream of the anguished lover, and the ending is deliberately left uncertain. Erminia is lodged near the wounded Tancredi, and we hear no more of her. Later Tasso feared that he might be criticized for this apparently happy ending and he declared his intention of making her become a nun. The essence of her story is in the pathos of her undeclared love which might well have finished in the cloister but is not, I think, spoilt by this inconclusive ending. She may be thought to have won Tancredi's love by her unsel- fish devotion or to have outlived her childish dreams in this brief contact with reality. Neither interpretation mars the delicacy of Tasso's portrait.

Tancredi's love for Clorinda is not only unhappy in that it is not returned, but is sinful in that it is for a pagan opponent and distracts him from his duty as a soldier of Christ. There is a note of despair and confusion in his conduct before ever he flights Clorinda, and in his masochistic surrender to the confident Amazon and his dazed contemplation of her when he should be fighting Argante, Tasso comes close to depicting his own dreamy passivity;

Ecco io chino le braccia, e t'appresento
senza difesa il petto: or chè no 'l fledi?

□and in the mental anguish to which his killing of Clorinda brings him, Tancredi is beset by all the horrors of Tasso's own moral confusion□the terrors of the darkness and his fear of solitude□

Vivrò fra i miei tormenti e le mie cure,
mie giuste furie, forsennato, errante;
paventarò l'ombre solinghe e scure
che 'l primo error mi recheranno inante,
e del sol che scoprì le mie sventure,
a schivo ed in orrore avrò il sembiante.
Temerò me medesmo; e da me stesso
sempre fuggendo, avrò me sempre appresso.

In this torment the memory of Clorinda's simple faith and her pardon cannot help him, and only the rebuke of the priest and his fear of hell bring him to his senses, but even then only slowly. The parallel with Tasso's own experience is notable. In spite of the ill-digested Petrarchan and Virgilian reminiscences, Tancredi stands out as a moving and original portrait of the introspective tragic lover□ he anticipates the anguish of the lovers of Romantic times when his popularity reached its peak.

Rinaldo's love for Armida is different from those of Olindo, Tancredi and Erminia, in that it is, until his awakening by Carlo and Ubaldo, entirely sensual. He is excused morally in that his downfall is entirely the result of enchantment. This episode was suggested to Tasso particularly by Homer's Circe, Ariosto's Alcina, and Trissino's Faleria, and certainly attracted him for the possibilities it offered in the depiction of physical and natural beauty and sensual pleasure. But his imagination is checked by moral considerations, and he is careful to stress the allegorical significance of the incident,

and to try to improve morally on his models. Rinaldo is in the mould of Achilles, young, impetuous and resentful of authority, and his break with Goffredo and departure from the Christian camp is in the Homeric and romance tradition□but Tasso is concerned to show the moral development of Rinaldo who is to represent an ideal of Christian virtue. His love for Armida is the central experience in his education□he is made to see the dangers of excessive self-confidence, which caused him to fall a victim to Armida's wiles, while Carlo and Ubaldo, with the instruction of Pietro (the Church) and the 'mago di Ascalona' (scienti.c knowledge in conformity with religion), are able to resist the enchantments and bring him to his senses by showing him his reflection in a shield (reason). Rinaldo is thus able to leave Armida and to return to the Christian fold where he repents of his past ways, confesses, prays and is then able to overcome the enchantments of the forest□from an egoistic and headstrong youth he has become a modest God-fearing man. The reconciliation with Armida at the end of the poem is due partially at least to Tasso's desire for moral perfection in Rinaldo, who does not desert his seductress, as Aeneas had deserted Dido, but forgives and converts her.

In spite of the didactic and allegorical elements, however, the seduction of Rinaldo in the garden of Armida is perhaps the most inspired passage in the whole poem; it hinges on a theme prominent in Tasso's poetry, sensual love. But here once more is the poetry not of fulfilment but of anticipation□not sensual satisfaction but erotic desire. Armida from the beginning reveals all the artful wiles of the court lady who keeps her admirers in a frenzy of anxious expectation: she is the complete flirt, such as might have tormented and delighted the youthful Tasso at Ferrara. Her enchanted garden stimulates the senses without satisfying them. Tasso lingers lovingly over his picture of the bathing girls, and even Carlo and Ubaldo stop to watch them, knowing they are sinful. The sense of sinfulness, the frustrating veil of the running water, the long swathing hair, emphasize the erotic delight:

e'l crin, ch'in cima al capo avea raccolto
in un sol nodo, immantinente sciolse,
che lunghissimo in giù cadendo e folto
d'un aureo manto i molli avori involse.
Oh che vago spettacolo è lor tolto!

Even Rinaldo in Armida's embrace is anxious and unsatisfied in the frustration of a merely sensual love that is never calmed:

Sovra lui pende; ed ei nel grembo molle
le posa il capo, e 'l volto al volto attolle,
e i famelici sguardi avidamente
in lei pascendo si consuma e strugge.
S'inchina, e i dolci baci ella sovente
liba or da gli occhi e da le labra or sugge,
ed in quel punto ei sospirar si sente □

Their passion is selfish: Armida wants to be worshipped and served, and Rinaldo forgets his duty in his attempt to satisfy his senses—but Rinaldo's love is spiritualized by his return to duty and Armida is redeemed by his love and forgiveness. However, this new, spiritual love is barely hinted at—it does not move Tasso because it lies outside his experience. What does move him is a world of alluring and unattainable female charm, and he succeeds, as few poets have done before or since, in expressing in his poetry the fascination and the frustration of the senses.

In the love episodes, then, Tasso's inner experience finds poetic expression, but to isolate the loves from the rest of the epic and to claim that here the poet's self is revealed free from the restricting influence of literary or moral pressure is far from the truth. Literary influences are strong here and the moral severity of the Counter-Reformation frequently intrudes. These are not, however, totally external, unwelcome impositions—they were part of the poet's own mind and imagination. He saw Armida as a Circe-Dido-Alcina-Faleria figure, and he felt the sinfulness of sensual love. So the love-stories are woven into the action as essential components of the heroic Christian epic, and Tasso insisted on the correctness of his decision, which he was prepared to defend, he said, on the authority of Aristotle: epic and romance were not, he maintained, separate genres.

As a background to the loves and feats of arms, the religious miracles and romantic enchantments, Tasso paints in a highly subjective and largely original natural scene. His nature descriptions are rarely superfluous ornaments or interludes: they are an adjunct to the action and emphasize its emotional tones. Trees and winds, sunshine and storm take on human attributes and reflect the mood of the characters or of the author. As in the *Aminta* therefore the natural background blends easily into the human action. The wind takes a part in the narrative, almost like a chorus, threatening in the storm, plaintive with Erminia by the brook, gentle and soothing in the Isles of Fortune, evoking sobs and sighs in the trees of the enchanted wood; and when the wind ceases the silence itself befriends the actors:

Senza risposta aver, va per l'amico
silenzio de le stelle a l'alte mura.

The trees and plants also participate: the great myrtle speaks with Clorinda's voice, and a chain of flowers binds Rinaldo (as the tree bound Silvia in the *Aminta*). The fascination of the garden of Armida is that around the sensuous lovers the trees and plants and animals repeat the human abandon:

Raddoppian le colombe i baci loro,
ogni animal d'amar si riconsiglia:
par che la dura quercia e 'l casto alloro
e tutta la frondosa ampia famiglia,
par che la terra e l'acqua e formi e spiri
dolcissimi d'amor sensi e sospiri.

But this apparently natural scene is really contrived. Here where we find Tasso's most elaborate nature description the subject is not a landscape but a garden, a work of art not of nature; and this garden is conditioned by the human action. It is a confusion of overluxuriant growth, but a baroque confusion, consciously disordered.

The natural scene is therefore treated extremely subjectively. It is difficult to speak of love of nature in Tasso: to him nature is kindly or hostile, attractive or repellent, not of itself, but according as one comes to it in peace or in anxiety, elated or afraid. Night, for example, may be friendly and comforting or mysterious and threatening. It is frequently associated with fear of the darkness, with the nightmares of the fevered mind and the unseen powers of evil:

Ma quando parte il sol, qui tosto adombra
notte, nube, caligine ed orrore
che rassembra infernal, che gli occhi ingombra
di cecità, ch'empie di tema il core.

The darkness, however, may be friendly: the confident mind has no such fears□the enchanted wood is 'lietamente ombroso' to the converted Rinaldo. The night may also be comforting when the darkness is dispelled by stars or moonlight, and Tasso has some superb pictures of its calm and beauty which, in spite of frequent literary reminiscences, still seem fresh and immediate in their fusion of sound and image:

Era la notte, e 'l suo stellato velo
chiaro spiegava e senza nube alcuna,
e già spargea rai luminosi e gelo
di vive perle la sorgente luna.

The light, the dawn, the sunshine, on the other hand, accompany the triumphant progress of the powers of goodness□in subtle ways Tasso parallels the progressive lightening of the sky with the advance of the Christian army, for example, or with Rinaldo's spiritual awakening:

Così pregava, e gli sorgeva a fronte
fatta già d'auro la vermiglia aurora
che l'elmo e l'arme e intorno a lui del monte
le verdi cime illuminando indora.

Each of the elements of nature is thus felt rather than described. Botanical, zoological and geographical knowledge is at a minimum□the few conventional similes of wild life are pallid beside Dante's □but nature evokes a deep emotional response. Deserts are vast solitudes; mountains are remote, fraught with difficulties and threatening. Water in particular fascinates Tasso, often as a kind of symbol of human restlessness: it may be

cruel and harsh in the turbulence of flood, rushing anxiously on in the mountain stream, seeking the peace of the sea where at last it is calm:

□ dove il flume
queta in letto maggior l'onde correnti.

It is mysterious and fascinating: although transparent it conceals the bathing girls, and although clear and beautiful its depths hold strange poisons:

ma dentro a i freddi suoi cristalli asconde
di tosco estran malvagità secreta.

Nature is neutral therefore: natural pnenomena reflect or symbolize human predicaments. Tasso's idyll does not betoken a romantic faith in the healing powers of mother nature. In the *Aminta* the refuge of a natural golden age is known to be illusory: and in the *Liberata* the simple pastoral life, for all its charms, cannot hold Erminia. It is a refuge from the city, from action and intrigue, but Erminia, like Tasso, could not settle in the rustic tranquillity; and the idyll of Armida's garden is blatantly false.

Stylistically this intensely subjective view of nature is brought out by a frequent use of personification to which the reader becomes so habituated that he hardly notices it. Night 'embraces' the earth, 'yields' to day, 'comes from the womb of its mother'; the sun 'threatens', the mountain 'hides its face'; the wind 'plays' with the waves; the dawn 'appears at its balcony'; the silence is 'friendly'; the stars 'cruel', the moon 'miserly'. And as Tasso's view is so personal and emotional, hardly observing but rather feeling the object, a simple generic vocabulary gives the barest outline of the scene, which is filled in with a picture in sound, so that readers are conscious of a music or harmony in Tasso's poetry that is difficult to define, but has stimulated so many composers to set his verse to music. The effectiveness of these passages has been variously attributed to the great care with which Tasso analysed the effects of aspirants and sibilants, long and short vowels, single and double consonants in the rhyme words, etc.; to his clever use of traditional literary images for their associative effect; and to the intensity of his emotional life. The result is that strange vitality of the written word which recalls and at the same time brings added poignancy to experience.

Thus each of the major motives of inspiration in the poem, arms, religion, magic, love, nature, while drawn from traditional literary sources, is interpreted subjectively and in large part originally. The unifying factor is not the narrative theme which is split into often conflicting romance and classical elements, but the poet's own personality, which by means of his style colours his heterogeneous material. The subjectivity and originality of Tasso's style makes his poetry among the most difficult for translators, and the non-Italian reader may miss much of the subtlety of the poet's effects. As so often in Tasso, there is a confusing combination of traditional with original: he studied and analysed carefully the stylistic devices of the classical epic, which reappear profusely in his poetry; yet he uses them subjectively to express new and intimate themes, outside the classical originals; and he goes beyond the rhetorical techniques in his attempt to

convey indeterminate hinterlands of experience which he could not particularize or rationalize.

The formal basis of Tasso's style is classical rhetoric: his analysis of style into sublime, mediocre and lowly, and his enunciation of the features of the sublime style is close to Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and Demetrius' treatise on *Style*, and is largely based on examples drawn from Homer and Virgil. Thus in his pursuit of sublimity he avoids the language of everyday life and particularly recommends the use of a learned literary vocabulary with 'foreign' words and Latinisms□hence 'destra' is used for 'mano', 'piaghe' for 'ferite', 'lumi' or 'luci' for 'occhi', 'atro' for 'oscuro'. Compound forms replace simple ones, 'dibattendo' for 'battendo', 'discorrere' for 'scorrere', 'dimostrare' for 'mostrare', etc.; and certain high-sounding epithets are much abused□ 'grande, alto, nobile, generoso, magnanimo', etc. The word-order is frequently changed from normal prose-usage to give dignity and solemnity□ sometimes effectively, sometimes with a hollow pompousness:

Allor sen ritornar le squadre pie
per le dianzi da lor calcate vie.

Repetition anaphora, syntactical symmetry give added weight:

quindi son l'alte mura aperte ed arse,
quindi l'armate schiere uccise e sparse.

Antithesis, hyperbole and enumeration highlight the scene:

su 'l morto il vivo, il vincitor su 'l vinto.
e fatto è il corpo suo solo una piaga.
Qui mille immonde Arpie vedresti e mille
Centauri e Sfingi e pallide Gorgoni.

Prosaic phrases or words are replaced by periphrasis, so that a ship is a 'curvo pinto', the navel 'la 've primo s'apprende nostro alimento': and abstract qualities are personified: 'Amor, Cortesia, Confusione, Sdegno', etc.

This basis of classical rhetoric does not, however, check the individuality of the poet's style. Even in the comparatively neutral passages which set the scene Tasso impresses on us his own reaction to the physical world. He starts from Aristotelian principles:

necessaria è in lui (il poeta epico) l'energia, la quale sì
con parole pone innanzi agli occhi la cosa che pare
altrui non di udirla ma di vederla.

This does not in practice lead to minute and objective descriptions, but to a personal view in which the poet selects a detail (his own view): Guelfo and Ubaldo see the enchanted boat of fortune appear□a speck, the stern, and finally the pilot:

vider picciola nave, e in poppa quella
che guidar li dovea fatal donzella

Similarly the return of the messenger sent out by Argante to challenge the Christians is described as if seen from the city walls:

□ tornò il re d'arme al suo viaggio
per l'orme ch'al venir calcate furo.

The visual aspect is often explicitly stressed by the poet, so that his description becomes a picture or even a stage-setting:

Degne d'un chiaro sol, degne d'un pieno
teatro, opre sarian sì memorande:

□and a carefully contrived word-order presents startling 'coups de théâtre' as when Erminia finds the wounded Tancredi:

Salta di sella e gli discopre il viso,
ed:□Oimè,□grida□è qui Tancredi ucciso.

There is similarly a great attention to sound: a lengthy section in the *Arte Poetica* analyses the sound effects of different letters and their combinations. Thus there is the simple mimicry of the clash of battle, winds and waves, trumpets□even, in a rare humorous aside, of ducks:

stuol d'anitre loquaci in secca riva
con rauco mormorar lieto l'attende □

There is also the subtle reinforcement of an image by phonetic means: the vastness of a sea, or of a desert:

□ a portar guerra
a i gran regni del mar e de la terra.
E in quelle solitudini arenose □

Notable too is the precision of the lines describing Argante,

□ che se stesso mira
del proprio sangue suo macchiato e molle,

so that he sees his blood ('macchiato') before he feels it ('molle'). All these devices indicate an intensity of experience which gives vitality often to the most unpromising material.

However, it is not only his 'participation' in the physical sensation which gives Tasso's style its subjective character. Behind the formal narrative we are constantly made aware of the emotional response of the poet to his story□his reaction of wonder, excitement, anxiety, horror. This is apparent of course in his frequent and feeling intrusion into his own narrative:

Il padre, ah non più padre! (ahi fera sorte,
ch'orbo di tanti figli a un punto il face!)

Thus Tasso establishes a bond with his characters: his sympathy, sorrow, wonder, accompany them, as when Tancrediun wittingly wounds Clorinda:

Misero, di che godi? □.

or when Armida swoons at Tancredi's departure:

Chiudesti i lumi, Armida: il Cielo avaro
invidiò il conforto a i tuoi martiri.

There are, however, many less obvious ways in which Tasso's style is coloured by his emotional reaction to his material. The personification of natural objects, referred to above, is one of these: the moon feels Tasso's horror at the incantation of Ismeno:

e la luna si turba e le sue corna
di nube avolge, e non appar più fora.

The dawn feels his relief at the defeat of evil:

l'alba lieta rideva □

Latinisms are used to express emotional tones for which the normal terms are too hackneyed or too pallid: 'flebili atti' ('lagrime'), 'sincero' ('puro'), 'padri' ('genitori'), etc. Syntactical variations reinforce the intensity of expression: as of Erminia 'che già sente palpitarsi il petto' (in place of 'si sente palpitare'), where the displacement of the reflexive pronoun strengthens the 'feeling' and increases the intimacy of the dependent infinitive 'palpitare'. Another characteristic device is the use of the pronoun in place of the reflexive particle, as to convey the tenderness of Erminia's invocation to the Christian tents: 'Raccogliete me dunque □' (for 'accoglietemi').

There is also a tendency to emphasize the psychological effect, so that often the psychological precedes the physical description, as in the lines on the wounded Tancredi, where the vital 'despair' has pride of place:

□ come il move
suo disperato di morir desio,
squarcia le fasce e le ferite □

Erminia has only been presented to the reader as 'bella' before she makes her first 'action', a sigh□she is to be a sigh throughout the poem. And Olindo has almost no physical characteristics other than being a 'giovinetto', but many psychological ones: 'cupidi desiri', 'modesto', 'brama assai, poco spera e nulla chiede'.

A result of this marked lyricism and preoccupation with the emotional situation rather than the physical fact is that there is often a vagueness in Tasso's narrative which is

reflected in his style. The details which do not contribute to the psychological situation are often ignored or hastily passed over: so that we do not know how Clorinda recognized the innocence of Sofronia and Olindo; nor do we know the end of Erminia's story, or of Armida's. This is partially attributable to Tasso's desire for 'magnificenza', his fear of lowering the tone of his poem by realistic and unpoetical detail. Thus the particular is replaced by the universal:

Tosto, ciascun, da gran desio compunto,
veste le membra de l'usate spoglie.
(il) buon Tancredi e □ chi vien con esso.

In many such cases the generic vocabulary sounds weak and flat, but more often the lack of physical detail is an advantage, and the vague phrases achieve their effects by their sound alone. This is particularly true of Tasso's treatment of magic, where the supernatural effects are cloaked in a mysterious reticence. How do Guelfo and Ubaldo pass from the bed of the river to the shore?

Gli accoglie il rio ne l'alto seno, e l'onda
soavemente in su gli spinge e porta.

Nor are we given any close description of Armida's garden which is an uncharted profusion of growth, of twisting paths and screens, half cultivated, half wild. Mystery would seem to be a conscious aim of Tasso□he feels the poetry of the unknown or the half-hinted truth. Female beauty is invariably half-concealed, mysterious and alluring:

stassi l'avaro sguardo in se raccolto,
e i tesori d'amore e i suoi nasconde.

The reader never knows how the image of the Virgin disappeared from the mosque in Canto II:

ch' incerta fama è ancor se ciò s'ascriva
ad arte umana od a mirabil opra.

Situations are presented often not from the allseeing gaze of the poet, but from that of the hesitating, fearful, hopeful participant: thus Sofronia is seen from Olindo's viewpoint, and the fleeing Armida, after the defeat of the pagan army, from the viewpoint of the pursuing Rinaldo, or the spectator's:

Al fin raccolta entro quel caro laccio,
che le fu caro forse □

Tasso's 'forse' leave the matter in doubt.

In his attempt to convey these psychological subtleties Tasso often uses an irrational and illogical language, sometimes consciously ambiguous: characteristic is his 'non so che', which abandons the attempt to be rational.

In queste voci languide risuona
un non so che di fiebile e soave.
Non sai ben dir s'adorna o se negletta □

□hence too his self-corrections:

non scese no, precipitò di sella.

Thus grammatical categories are blurred, ambiguities add shades of meaning, and literary allusions also add their overtones□as in the picture of Gildippe and Odoardo who take on something of Dante's Paolo and Francesca:

E son que' duo che van sì giunti in uno.

Tasso has not generally been given credit for this personal and largely original style□indeed, stylistically he has often been criticized as contributing to and encouraging the 'corrupt' taste of the Seicento. There is certainly some truth in this view, but it can only be accepted with reservations. Tasso's poetry has affinities with that of the Secentisti, but it is still far removed from them and it is as well to stress the differences. The first is quantitive. 'Secentismo' evolved out of the poetic styles of the Cinquecento□it is characterized not by new devices, but by the intensification of traditional techniques: antithesis, hyperbole, personification, inversion, play on words, periphrasis, etc., which occur with moderate frequency in the poets of the sixteenth century and with unrestrained profusion in the 'Secentisti'. Such devices are used with infinitely greater restraint by Tasso. Secondly the Secentisti exaggerated the forms of expression until the original inspiration and feeling were often lost and the means of expression became all important: the aim of the poet, said Marino, was to shock. This is not perhaps so remote from Tasso's principle that the poet should arouse 'maraviglia', but in Tasso's poetry the conceit normally arises directly out of its poetic context□it is functional in that it reflects a condition or situation in the narrative; it exists in order to draw attention, not to itself, but to an unusual concept.

If there are moments when the charge of 'Secentismo' seems justified, such moments most often occur when Tasso is striving to maintain the illustrious tone which he believed essential in the epic. Sometimes his play on words is hollow and artificial: Clorinda's nurse explains her mother's fear that the birth of a white baby to coloured parents might have aroused her father's suspicions:

ch'egli avria dal candor che in te si vede
argomentato in lei non bianca fede.

There are some intellectually contrived antitheses, as of Rinaldo resisting Armida's entreaties that he should not abandon her:

resiste e vince: e in lui trova impedita
Amor l'entrata, il lagrimar l'uscita.

□and an excessive symmetry of syntax, as of Olindo:

brama assai, poco spera, e nulla chiede:
nè sa scoprirsi, o non ardisce: ed ella
o lo sprezza, o no 'l vede, o non s'avede.

The word-order is sometimes displaced to the point of obscurity:

Tu lo mio stabilire e in tempo corto
puoi ridrizzar il tuo caduto seggio.

There are too some exaggerated and inapt metaphors, of which the most criticized perhaps is the description of Erminia relating her woes to the fields:

e secretari del suo amore antico
fea i muti campi e quel silenzio amico.

Most of Tasso's conceits fall within these categories, and are usually a combination of two or more of these devices: antithesis, word-play, metaphorical extremes, parallelism of syntax, and displaced word-order.

The greatest concentrations of conceits are in a few emotionally tense and confused situations□the Sofronia-Olindo episode, the death of Clorinda, Erminia's love for Tancredi, and Rinaldo in Armida's garden□and here the formal devices are used carefully with relation to their context. Thus the contrast between Sofronia's restraint and reticence and the reactions of her lover and the general public is stressed in antithetical word-play:

Ahi! tanta amò la non amante amata. □ e pianta da ciascun, non piagni.

Tancredi's emotional *volte-face* when he kills his opponent and discovers it is Clorinda justifies the antithetical

□ a dar si volse
vita con l'acqua a chi co 'l ferro uccise.

Equally justified is the complicated play on the lover's eyes as mirrors of his lady's beauty, continued for several stanzas in the account of Rinaldo resting on Armida's lap:

Volgi,□dicea□deh volgi□il cavaliero
□a me quegli occhi onde beata bei.

This is no mere playing on words: it responds closely to the situation of the vain self-loving Armida gazing in her mirror, and the adoring Rinaldo who is no longer anything in himself, but merely a reflection, or an echo of his lady:

chè son, se tu no 'l sai, ritratto vero
de le bellezze tue gli incendi miei.

Erminia's antithetical style similarly responds to her inner conflict, as a Moslem loving a Christian:

Ella l'amato medicar desia,
e curar il nemico a lei conviene.

□and her play on words in describing her lover to the enemy king is essential to her situation:

Ahi quanto è crudo nel ferire! a piaga ch'ei faccia, erba non giova od arte maga.

So too Tasso's distortions of word-order have a carefully considered poetic effect, as in conveying the love-sick Erminia's longing for Tancredi:

O belle a gli occhi miei tende latine!□or Goffredo's veneration for Jerusalem:Queste sacre e dal Ciel dilette mura.

One should not therefore label the *Liberata* a predominantly Secentista poem, or consider the conceits impurities in a generally pure work. Tasso endeavoured in his style to convey the force and delicacy of his reaction to the story he had to tell, and the conceits are an almost inevitable accompaniment of this subjectivity of style. Far from priding himself on new and startling effects, Tasso condemned the excesses of the 'concettisti' and shunned their obscurity□and when he himself moved towards greater clarity and simplicity of style his verse was generally found to be pallid and monotonous, as we shall see later.

Source: C.P. Brand, "The Epic: The 'Gerusalemme Liberata,'" in *Torquato Tasso: A Study of the Poet and of His Contribution to Literature,* Cambridge University Press, 1965, pp. 79-118.

Topics for Further Study

Research the Crusades and compare the actions, behaviors, and outcomes of the historical record to the events, characters, and outcomes in Tasso's poem.

Chivalry is an important element in the Renaissance art epic. After reading about chivalry, compare Tasso's treatment of the heroic ideal to the medieval chivalric code.

Tasso suggests that his poem is an attempt to merge the Christian philosophy of Dante's work with the political ideology of Virgil's writings. After exploring Dante and Virgil, how well does *Gerusalemme Liberata* fulfill Tasso's goal?

Women are not often thought of as warriors and historically not allowed to fight in most Renaissance European armies, yet the major warrior for the Saracens is female. What does Tasso say about women and evil by making Clorinda the head of the Turkish army?

As a culture, American society does not glorify war, yet a lot of literature revolves around war and its consequences. How does Tasso resolve the conflict between the social needs for peace and the literary needs for war?

Compare and Contrast

18th Century: During the Renaissance and throughout most of Western history since then, women have not been allowed to fight in armies. In fact, women are legally barred from enlisting in the military for most of American history. Europeans, as well, made military service by women illegal.

19th Century: Florence Nightingale founds the nursing corps of the British Army during the Crimean War. Clara Barton assembles a similar unit in the United States during the American Civil War.

20th Century: Women have made significant strides towards increasing their numbers and presence in all branches of the military. Women not only serve in the general corps of the army, navy, and marines, many can be found in highranking supervisory positions. In the last half of the twentieth century, a handful of women braved established military and societal codes to integrate branches and schools that had been exclusively male. Despite these vast changes, some countries in Europe and the Middle East, while allowing women to serve in the military, keep women out of combat service.

16th Century: Religious intolerance is predominant at the time that Tasso is writing. The Protestant Reformation began a century earlier with the writings of Jon Huss and Martin Luther's break with the Catholic Church in Rome. Italy remained predominately Catholic and, with the power of Spain and France, started the Counter Reformation and the Inquisition. There is a great deal of animosity between Catholics and Protestants.

20th Century: While there are still some hotbeds of religious tension, a majority of the European countries adhere to policies of religious tolerance. In the United States, laws mandate freedom of religion. The greater public's acceptance of varied religious practices continues to grow as more and more people are encouraged to integrate outside their cultural backgrounds and come in contact with those of differing faiths.

16th Century: Most Europeans during this century believe in magic, mystical practices, and philosophies to explain things they can not understand. The Catholic Church has forbidden most scientific exploration because it threatens their view of God's connection to the Universe.

17th Century: In 1609, Galileo makes the first complete astronomical telescope. Using his new telescope, Galileo notices that the moon has an uneven, mountainous surface and that numerous stars make up the Milky Way Galaxy. In 1610, he discovers the four largest satellites of Jupiter, the first satellites of a planet other than Earth to be detected. His investigations support the Copernican theory of the solar system; however, this theory was denounced as dangerous to faith. Galileo was warned not to uphold it or teach it.

19th Century: Charles Darwin establishes Darwinism, which is the theory of evolution. Darwin meticulously documents observations that lead him to question the generally

held belief in the specific creation of each species. Darwin observed species undergo a continuing struggle to survive and adapt. His theory of evolution hinges on the fact that species need their variations to adapt to their environments, allowing them to survive and reproduce. His monumental *Origin of Species* is published in 1859.

20th Century: This century saw an explosion of scientific, astronomic, medical, and technological advances. From Einstein's famous theorem, to the landing of the first man on the moon and the proliferation of information technology, man's understanding of the world within and around him is greater than it has ever been. What has not changed from Tasso's age is that the more people learn the more they understand how much is unknown, pushing them to continue posing questions and seeking their answers. Magic, for many people, has become relegated to a world of sideshow demonstrations, consisting of card tricks, illusions, and fortune tellers.

What Do I Read Next?

In the 1990s, Robert Fagles produced the most celebrated poetic translations of Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. These highly readable translations tell the stories of the Greek victory at Troy and Odysseus's ten-year voyage home. In European literature, these poems started it all.

The Aeneid by Virgil, first century A.D., is Rome's answer to Homer's epics. A cross between political propaganda and high literature, Virgil's poem tells the story of an escaped Trojan prince and his adventures while searching for a new homeland. *The Aeneid* is available in multiple prose and poetic translations including editions by John Dryden (1680) and Allen Mandelbaum (1972).

Dante Alighieri's three-part Medieval masterpiece, *The Divine Comedy*, ranks as one of the most widely read and influential epic poems ever written. Dante has Virgil guide the main character through Hell and Purgatory, while Beatrice (his childhood sweetheart) guides him through Heaven. In each place, Dante describes famous historical and literary characters that spend eternity in the various stages of the afterlife. It, too, exists in numerous translations.

The Tale of Genji, 1100 A.D., by Murasaki Shikibu, tells a story of romance, political intrigue, and court life in Medieval Japan. Written by an aristocratic Japanese woman, the story revolves around Genji's rise to power, fame, and wealth, while detailing a culture that is foreign to most Western readers. A full translation by Edward Seidensticker appeared in 1976, which he later abridged in 1990 for a paperback edition.

Thomas Malory's 1472 *Le Morte d'Arthur* remains the single best collection of the tales of King Arthur. While not an epic in strict terms, since it is in prose and not poetry, the work combines all of the previous tales, bringing them into a cohesive whole. From the appearance of Merlin to the Sword in the Stone to the death of Arthur at the hands of his illegitimate son, Mordred, Malory's work is the stuff legends are made of.

Matteo Maria Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, 1480, marks the beginning of the Renaissance Art Epic. This tale of chivalric love and romance takes an obscure French hero, Orlando, and makes him travel in endless pursuit of the woman he loves through lands filled with magic, fairies, and monsters. Never fully translated into English until Charles Ross in 1995, the work remains a great under read classic.

The most influential Renaissance poem is Ludovic Ariosto's massive *Orlando Furioso*, written between 1499 and 1525. This huge poem uses Boiardo's character, Orlando, to relate a leisurely tale of sex, chivalry, and love. The poem has been translated numerous times, including the 1591 version by John Harrington and the 1975 translation by Barbara Reynolds.

Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, 1596, is the English answer to the Italian Renaissance epic poem. The scale is vast, the plan simple: Spenser envisioned a tale for each of the virtues and the vices, fourteen in all, as a way to entertain and instruct his readers. He sought to challenge the Italian poets and his work has remained popular for over four hundred years.

John Milton, himself an admirer of Spenser, wrote the "greatest" religious epic in *Paradise Lost*, (1664) which chronicles the beginning of the world. Adam and Eve are his heroes, but his creation of Satan is much more interesting and many Romantic poets, including Lord Byron and Percy Shelley, thought Satan was the hero of the poem. Milton's description of Eden as the Bower of Bliss comes directly out of Tasso's poem.

The Voyage to the Isle of Love is generally regarded as the last Renaissance Art epic written in English. Published in 1684 by Aphra Behn, the poem chronicles the adventures of Lysander as he pursues the love of his life, Aminta. She followed *Voyage to the Isle of Love* in 1688 with an unfinished epic entitled *A Return to the Isle of Love*.

Further Study

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Bowra explores the features of epic poetry from the ancients through early modern times.

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This work explores how love, both romantic and patriotic, works in Spenser's poem.

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Curran, Stuart, "The Epic" in *Poetic Form and British Romanticism*, Oxford University Press, 1986. Curran explores how poetic form influenced and shaped Romantic poetry. This essay focuses on epic poetry and its features.

Dennis, John, *Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry*, Richard Parker, 1701, Garland, 1971.

Dennis discusses all types of poetry and how these poetic forms developed, spending a good deal of time on epic and heroic poetry.

Gutschera, Deborah, "'A Shape of Brightness': The Role of Women in Romantic Epic," in *Philological Quarterly*, Vol. 66, 1987, pp. 87-108.

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This major essay, written in poetic form, calls on British poets to write new epics. He creates not only a definition for epic poetry, but a tradition as well. In addition, Hayley specifically tells women to write epic poems.

Murrin, Michael, *The Allegorical Epic: Essays in Its Rise and Fall*, University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Murrin explores the Renaissance epic and its allegorical elements.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Epics for Students (EfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, EfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of EfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of EfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in EfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by EfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

EfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Epics for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the EfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the EfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Epics for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Epics for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from EfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Epics for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from EfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Epics for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of EfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Epics for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of EfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Epics for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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